

**Opening remarks by the
Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee of the
Legislative Council on 18 April 2024**

Dear Chairman,

I wish to brief Members now on the main points of the estimates of expenditure of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) in 2024-25.

2. In this financial year, the CMAB is allocated about \$883 million of funding. The focus of our work for this financial year is as follows:

(I) The improved electoral system

3. After improving the electoral system in 2021 as well as improving the district governance system and reforming the District Councils in 2023, the HKSAR Government successfully conducted various important elections in the past three years, including the Election Committee Subsector Ordinary Elections, the Legislative Council General Election, the Chief Executive Election, the Legislative Council Election Committee Constituency By-election and the District Council Ordinary Election. The new-term District Council was smoothly formed and formally assumed office on 1 January this year.

4. These five elections were smoothly held in a fair, just and honest manner, and the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong” has been fully implemented at all governance levels of the HKSAR, ensuing that the power to administer Hong Kong is firmly placed in the hands of patriots for the good governance and long-term stability of the HKSAR.

5. We will adhere to the improved electoral system in the long run and fully implement the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong”. Meanwhile, drawing on the invaluable experience of the previous elections, we will continue working with the Electoral Affairs Commission as well as the Registration and Electoral Office to study further enhancement of various electoral arrangements, including reviewing the current legislation and various practical electoral arrangements, further applying information technology and streamlining electoral procedures. The purpose is to continuously enhance efficiency on the premise of ensuring fairness and justice, thereby making elections more efficient and user-friendly while ensuring that they are conducted in a safe and orderly manner. In addition, we will strengthen publicity and promotional work, with a view to enabling various sectors of the community to better understand the importance of the new electoral system and the full implementation of the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong”.

(II) Promoting the Constitution and the Basic Law

6. The Chief Executive announced in last year’s Policy Address that patriotic education would be rolled out, and a Working Group on Patriotic Education would be established under the Constitution and Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee led by the Chief Secretary for Administration. The Working Group on Patriotic Education was formally established on 8 April, which is mainly responsible for co-ordinating the work of government departments and non-governmental organisations in taking forward patriotic education and dovetailing with the Patriotic Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, with a view to enhancing education on our country’s history, culture and current affairs on different fronts, thereby promoting patriotism and ensuring its continuity from generation to generation. To take forward patriotic education in an all-round manner, the Working Group will focus efforts on various key aspects, including school education; local community; history,

politics, economy and culture; and media publicity. We are actively making preparations to convene the first meeting of the Working Group as soon as possible.

7. The Constitution and the Basic Law together form the constitutional basis and order of the HKSAR, providing the solid legal basis and constitutional framework for the principle of “One Country, Two Systems”. We will continue to carry out publicity and education work on the Constitution and the Basic Law in a diversified manner, including making more extensive use of online platforms and social media, rolling out large-scale publicity events at the community level, producing more television and radio programmes, and enhancing publicity and education work targeting specific groups such as students, teachers, youths and civil servants.

(III) Integration into overall national development

8. As regards Mainland affairs, the Chief Executive established the Steering Group on Integration into National Development (Steering Group) at the end of 2022. The Steering Group is chaired by the Chief Executive, with three Secretaries of Departments as deputies, enhancing the top-level leadership from “1” to “1+3”. The Steering Group takes forward, co-ordinates and provides steer for various initiatives on integration into overall national development from a macro perspective, including proactively dovetailing with national strategies such as the 14th Five-Year Plan, development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as strengthening co-operation with different regions in the Mainland, thereby injecting continuous impetus to the growth of Hong Kong.

9. The Steering Group adopts the three-pronged approach of conducting research, planning and co-ordination, as well as supervision on implementation. In line with the attitude of being proactive, pragmatic, committed and capable, and under the

principle of achieving mutual benefits and advancement, the Steering Group will continue to, at the top level, co-ordinate, oversee and provide guidance for the formulation and implementation of various policy measures to facilitate Hong Kong's further dovetailing with national strategies, in order to promote the overall development of the country and Hong Kong.

(IV) Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

10. On the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the HKSAR Government will continue to maintain close liaison with relevant Central Ministries and Commissions, the Guangdong Provincial Government, the Macao Special Administrative Region Government and the governments of various Greater Bay Area cities, make good use of the Guangdong-Hong Kong and Hong Kong-Shenzhen co-operation mechanisms, and enhance inter-connectivity and high-quality co-operation amongst the Greater Bay Area cities under the principles of complementarity and mutual benefits, with a view to developing together the Greater Bay Area into an international first-class bay area ideal for living, working and travelling.

11. At the end of last year, the Central Government promulgated important planning documents related to Greater Bay Area development, including the Overall Development Plan for the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Co-operation Zone, and the Three-Year Action Plan for the Development of International Business Environment in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, etc., which aim to expedite and foster high-quality development of the Greater Bay Area, and fully implement the Central Government's strategic plans on Greater Bay Area development. The HKSAR Government attaches huge importance to these planning documents and has taken the initiative to promptly liaise with the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal

Government to discuss further enhancing co-operation, in order to expedite the promotion of policy innovation and breakthrough as well as the compatibility and alignment of rules and mechanisms amongst the Greater Bay Area cities, and step up efforts to take forward the development of Qianhai.

12. Under “One Country, Two Systems”, Hong Kong is the only world-class city that can capitalise on both the China advantage and the international advantage. To leverage its distinctive advantage of having strong support from the Motherland and close connection with the world, Hong Kong should not only take on important roles as “super connector” and “super value-adder” in the Greater Bay Area, but also promote integrated development of the Greater Bay Area through sincere co-operation with other Greater Bay Area cities, thereby creating more development opportunities for Hong Kong residents and enterprises. Meanwhile, we also need to support other Greater Bay Area cities in tapping into global markets through the international platform of Hong Kong and fully leverage Hong Kong’s dual roles in “going global and attracting foreign investment”, thereby making the successful policies implemented in the Greater Bay Area a valuable reference for the entire country and contributing to the deepening of reform and opening up of the country, with the aim of aligning with the new positioning of “one point, two places” of the Greater Bay Area.

13. The HKSAR Government attaches great importance to “telling good stories of the Greater Bay Area” and has been striving to make use of diversified and multimedia means, including traditional media, the Internet and social media platforms, as well as physical activities and exhibitions, etc., to promote Greater Bay Area development to local, Mainland and overseas stakeholders, so as to further attract Mainland and overseas talents, enterprises and capital to Hong Kong to grasp the significant opportunities arising from Greater Bay Area development. We will also continue to, through the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development

Promotion Centre established in April last year, organise different types of activities including seminars and study missions for Hong Kong residents and enterprises pursuing development in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area, so as to promote Greater Bay Area development and better understand their needs for providing them with appropriate assistance.

14. The HKSAR Government has set and enhanced key performance indicators for the work on promoting opportunities of the Greater Bay Area, namely organising and participating in promotional programmes and networking sessions to be attended by no less than 8 800 persons, and reaching out to no less than 1 100 entrepreneurs and representatives of business firms this year. We will continue to conduct relevant work at full steam to promote opportunities of the Greater Bay Area.

(V) Mainland Offices

15. In 2024-25, the financial provision for the five Mainland Offices of the HKSAR Government and their 11 Liaison Units is about \$357 million.

16. The Mainland Offices will continue to actively deepen exchanges and co-operation with Mainland provinces and municipalities in various areas, such as commerce and trade, finance, innovation and technology, creative industries and youth exchanges, etc., and organise and participate in large-scale events including various forums, study missions and exhibitions, etc., with a view to opening up more development and business opportunities for Hong Kong residents and enterprises. The Mainland Offices will also maintain close liaison with associations, chambers of commerce, enterprises and student groups of Hong Kong residents in the Mainland, provide them with appropriate assistance, and convey to relevant Mainland authorities the views and expectations of Hong Kong residents and enterprises living and pursuing development in the Mainland. Moreover, the Mainland Offices will continue to, through the

Dedicated Teams for Attracting Businesses and Talents, proactively reach out to target enterprises and talents in the Mainland to attract them to pursue development in Hong Kong.

17. On another front, the Mainland Offices will make good use of online and offline platforms to step up publicity and promotional efforts, in a bid to widely promote the opportunities of Hong Kong and its unique advantages under “One Country, Two Systems” to the people and business sector in the Mainland, thereby telling good stories of Hong Kong in the Mainland. Also, the Mainland Offices will strengthen promotion of various mega events in Hong Kong, so as to attract more Mainland visitors to Hong Kong.

(VI) Rights of the individual

18. In respect of the rights of the individual, subventions to the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCPD) remain the major part of our financial provision.

19. The EOC is responsible for the implementation of the four anti-discrimination ordinances. In 2024-25, the total subvention for the EOC is about \$131 million. The new EOC Chairperson Ms Linda LAM is present at today’s meeting. She will lead the EOC in continuing to, through different types of public education, publicity and promotional activities, convey the positive messages of mutual respect, diversity and inclusion, with a view to safeguarding and promoting social harmony and stability together.

20. In 2024-25, the total subvention for the PCPD is about \$97 million. The PCPD will continue to combat doxxing acts, which have been criminalised, through various means. As at 31 March this year, the PCPD has initiated criminal investigations into 300 suspected doxxing cases, and conducted 46 arrest operations and arrested 47 persons involved. In addition, the

PCPD has issued over 1 900 cessation notices to 43 online platforms, requesting removal of more than 30 000 doxxing messages. Besides, the PCPD will actively take forward the work and publicity on protecting data security, so as to assist enterprises in promoting the development of digital economy.

21. Dear Chairman, this is the end of my introduction. My colleagues and I would be pleased to answer enquires from Members, and to hear Members' valuable views and suggestions on our work. Thank you.

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
April 2024