



Welcome Address by Mr Anthony WU, JP
Chairman, Hospital Authority
at the 2006 HA Convention
on 8 May 2006

Vice Minister LI, Secretary CHOW, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning! On behalf of the Hong Kong Hospital Authority, it is my pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to all of you to this year's Hospital Authority Convention. Thank you for being part of the 2,600 participants here today. Your presence and participation have already made this Convention a worthwhile and meaningful event. I would also like to express my gratitude to the panel of distinguished speakers, who I am sure will meet the educational needs of everyone here.

Today, we are most honoured by the presence of both Vice Minister LI Xi from the Ministry of Health, People's Republic of China and Dr York CHOW, Secretary for Health, Welfare & Food of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Despite their busy schedule, Vice Minister LI and Secretary CHOW have most graciously accepted our invitation to be our officiating guests this morning.

The theme of this year's Convention, "From Policy to Practice", has been most aptly chosen. Under Dr CHOW's leadership and with assistance of the Health & Medical Development Advisory Committee, the Hong Kong Government has mapped out a future service delivery model for Hong Kong's healthcare system. To put the Government's policy directions into practice, the Hospital Authority will work more innovatively and collaboratively with the private sector and other partners in health. Given the diverse range of health reform topics and the presence of internationally renowned experts in this Convention, I am certain that all of us will gain insightful knowledge and ideas to put our policies into practice.

Implementing reform and getting policies into practice require both courage and skilful determination. In this regard, I am pleased to have Mr Shane SOLOMON joining our senior management team as Chief Executive. I am sure with Shane's experience and ability, he will lead our outstanding team of professionals to put our policies into practice.

It has been a remarkable year for the Hospital Authority. With Avian Flu and other diseases knocking on our door every now and again, we have put in many measures to prepare ourselves for such attack and I can confidently say that we are very well prepared to meet the challenges.

The handling of the WTO Ministerial last December was not an easy task but with our top professional team, we have handled the situation extremely well to everybody's praises.

The judgment on the long litigation with the doctors on overtime, statutory holidays etc was handed down in March and whilst we could take it to higher courts to appeal, we do want to put this behind us and move on. We are at present working with the doctors to find a mutually acceptable solution and I am confident that this can be achieved.

We have put in measures to address staff morale issues such as pay, career paths, work hours, job securities etc recognizing of course of our limited resources and realizing that we still have a long way to go. Be that as it may, staff are our most important assets and we will do our very best to address their concerns.

With additional funding from the Government and extreme hard work by all our staff, we will be able to achieve, for the first time in the last six years, a balanced budget this year. This is by no means an easy task and we must continue to strive to contain costs and expand our revenue base, meanwhile continue to maintain the quality of service we are providing to the people of Hong Kong and to do what we can to improve staff morale. I would like to take this opportunity to express my most heartfelt thanks to our Secretary, Dr CHOW, for recognising the work of the Authority in providing cost effective, quality healthcare services to the people of Hong Kong and increasing the Government's subvention to us for the next three years.

Despite the balanced budget, the Hospital Authority continues to face many challenges. High on the list includes the rapid advances in biomedical science with new drug discoveries and new technologies being announced almost daily. This puts tremendous cost pressure on the Authority. In addition, there is the constant threat of pandemic flu and other emerging infection. Rising demands has put additional pressure on our already very over-work staff.

I have great confidence that the Hospital Authority will be able to meet these challenges. This is because I believe the Authority has at its core a highly resilient workforce who are highly dedicated and professional. Indeed, our doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and other staff are the most valuable asset of our organisation. Their team work, commitment, professionalism and diligence, together with their strong sense of duty and ethical base, are the envy of many healthcare organisations around the world.

That is why when I took up the Chairmanship of the Authority some 18 months ago, I went back to basic and promoted the "people first" culture. I wanted our staff to feel that they are valued and respected. With this initiative, the Authority has put many measures into practice to promote the core value of respect, trust, teamwork, fairness, integrity and quality. Steadily but surely, the "people first" culture will make a real difference to our organisation. In particular, we want our staff to know that they are the most valued asset of the organisation and we will try our very best to make them feel proud of being a member of the Hospital

Authority.

In the same vein, outstanding staff will be properly recognised. Tomorrow, before the close of the Convention, we will be presenting the outstanding staff and team awards. I hope you will be able to join this joyous occasion and show your appreciation to both the winners and nominees alike.

Before ending, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate two of our healthcare professionals upon their receipt of internationally renowned awards recently. Firstly, we have Ms Sylvia FUNG from Kwong Wah Hospital who received the Florence Nightingale Medal in recognition of her lifelong commitment and contribution to quality nursing care. This is the first time that a nurse from Hong Kong has received such an award which was presented to Sylvia by President Hu at the People's Great Hall in Beijing last year.. Secondly, we have Prof S T FAN and his colleagues in the Department of Surgery of the University of Hong Kong who were conferred with a first-class award by the Beijing National Office of Science & Technology in recognition of their achievements in liver transplantation. On behalf of the Hospital Authority, I would like to pay tribute to these colleagues for their outstanding achievements.

The gathering of so many distinguished speakers, government officials, healthcare experts and community leaders in this Convention today provides a unique forum to share ideas and disseminate the latest knowledge. The Convention also offers an unparalleled opportunity for participants to network with one another and interact with eminent leaders in the field. I wish you all a most fruitful and rewarding Convention. For those from overseas, I also wish you a pleasant and enjoyable stay in Hong Kong.