Speech by PSHA at YMCA's 110th Anniversary Volunteers Appreciation Ceremony (English only)
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Following is the speech by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Raymond Young, on the theme "Volunteers Make a Difference" at YMCA's 110th Anniversary Volunteers Appreciation Ceremony today (October 21):

Volunteers and friends,

It is my pleasure to join you in your celebration of the YMCA's 110th anniversary tonight. This event is particularly meaningful as we are paying tribute to the dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers. May I, first of all, invite all of you to give them a round of applause.

Volunteers do make a lot of difference. Long before the Government initiated the "Volunteer Movement" in 1998, many individuals and organisations had been devoting countless hours of volunteer work to help the needy, spreading love and care in the society and sustaining social cohesion. One of the pioneers was YMCA. YMCA is not only renowned for its social services for the under-privileged in Hong Kong, it has also contributed a lot to promoting volunteerism. Some 400 volunteers of YMCA have dedicated 20 000 hours of service in the past year for children, youths, ethnic minorities and the needy in various projects ranging from education to youth development, and from community services to organic farming. YMCA has indeed mobilised a very valuable social resource to serve the community, lighting up the lives of not only the beneficiaries, but the benefactors themselves.

As volunteers would know best, giving is a greater blessing than receiving. Everyone can be a volunteer in their daily life by helping others anytime, anywhere. It can be as simple as offering your helping hand to the elderly next door, giving professional advice to charitable organisations, or simply sponsoring a child in the mountainous region of China. I am glad that in Hong Kong we are migrating to what we call "third-level volunteering" which means everyone living out the spirit of a volunteer in one's daily life, and that it becomes part of our nature to help others whenever a need arises.

Behind each volunteer is the facilitating tasks done by the volunteer organisation. With the organisation's network and expertise, volunteers are able to

identify service opportunities and acquire the necessary skills. Many charitable organisations in Hong Kong are now performing this role, but YMCA stands out among them.

My congratulations go to those who are going to receive the awards tonight. This is not only a recognition given by YMCA, but also a milestone of your dedication and long service offered to the society. Lastly, let me congratulate YMCA for its success in the past 110 years. Also, I would like to call for your support to the promotion of volunteerism by YMCA so that together we can make a difference and contribute to a more harmonious and caring society here.

Thank you.

Ends/Friday, October 21, 2011

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