

# Keynote speech by SITI at GSMA Ministerial Programme of Mobile World Congress 2025 in Barcelona (English only)

Following is the keynote speech by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, at the Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA) Ministerial Programme of the Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2025 in Barcelona, Spain on March 5 (Barcelona time):

Distinguished speakers, guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Buenas tardes! Good afternoon! It is a privilege to join you all at the MWC Barcelona 2025, Europe's pre-eminent mobile tech summit hosted in the fascinating city of Barcelona.

Renowned for its architectural brilliance and rich cultural tapestry, Barcelona is undoubtedly a beacon of creativity in Europe. More than ten thousand kilometers away, Hong Kong shares the same dynamic spirit and strong commitment to innovation. This brings me here today to share with you Hong Kong's innovation and technology (I&T) landscape as well as opportunities that connect people around the world.

Hong Kong: Our odyssey to be an International I&T Centre

Well known for the free, international and business-friendly environment, Hong Kong ranks first in Asia and third in the world in the Global Financial Centres Index. The success of this Asia's World City is our spirit of embracing changes and evolving with times.

The theme of this year's MWC Barcelona, "Converge, Connect, Create", aptly encapsulates the key directions of Hong Kong's new mission. We are racing to become an international I&T centre, as enshrined in our I&T Development Blueprint promulgated in 2022. We strive to perfect Hong Kong's I&T ecosystem with conducive policies to support the development of strategic tech industries, including AI and robotics, life and health technologies, new energy and advanced manufacturing industries.

The Blueprint not only converges and connects our game plan on technological innovation and talent cultivation, but also creates new impetus to Hong Kong's high quality development and enhances our citizens' quality of life with day-to-day convenience brought about by technology innovation.

Bridging the digital divide by building a Smart City and a Digital Inclusive Society

Hong Kong is among the world's top 20 smart cities in the Smart City Index released by the IMD (International Institute for Management Development). One of the board development direction set out in our I&T Blueprint is to promote digital economy and develop Hong Kong into a smart city. Over the years, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has rolled out various measures to make Hong Kong a more advanced and livable smart city, such as developing new digital infrastructure, opening up public data, and enhancing government services by applying advanced technologies such as blockchain and IoT (Internet of Things).

Indeed, one of the best testimonies to a city's I&T achievement is the degree of digitalisation. In Hong Kong, all submissions and payments to the Government have electronic options. More than three millions of people are enjoying the convenience and efficiency of accessing government services and online identity verification through a mobile application called "iAM Smart". A corporate version of "iAM Smart", nick-named CorpID, is upcoming too.

Known for the cultural diversity and international landscape, digital inclusiveness is an area that we take pride in. In Hong Kong, where the household broadband penetration rate and smartphone penetration rate are both approximately 97 per cent, the internet usage rate among Hong Kong citizens aged 65 and above rocketed, from 56 per cent in 2018 to 84 per cent in 2023, slightly ahead of the European rate of around 78 per cent.

Hong Kong's life expectancy has seen a steady increase over the past half century, reaching 83 years for men and 88 years for women in 2023. As society becomes so digitally knitted and increasingly mobile, we recently launched the "Smart Silver" Digital Inclusion Programme for Elders, to address the challenges of an increasingly aging society. This programme fortifies our digital inclusive efforts by providing elders with community-based training and on-the-spot helpdesks to enhance elders' knowledge on new digital technologies and support their navigation by common mobile applications.

Hong Kong's Research and Development (R&D) Excellence driving global I&T collaboration

Global collaboration is a necessity to tackle unprecedented challenges. Hong Kong is the only city in the world housing five of the world's top 100 universities, providing a readily available pool of R&D capabilities, know-how and talent. These favourable conditions make possible many scientific and technological breakthroughs by harnessing cutting-edge innovations from both the East and the West.

You may wish to know that our flagship R&D initiative – InnoHK has built collaboration with more than 30 world-renowned universities and research institutes from 12 economies, set up a total of 30 research laboratories. Of these, 16 of them focus on AI and robotics-related technologies. Our goal is to converge top-notch researchers from all over the world to conduct world-class and impactful collaborative researches.

The vigorous development of AI is reshaping global economic landscape. Our AI Supercomputing Centre has just commenced operation, and the computing power will be ramped up gradually to 3 000 petaFLOPS this year. Newly announced in our annual Government Budget last week, we will earmark \$1 billion Hong Kong dollars, equivalent to 120 million euros, for the establishment of the Hong Kong AI Research and Development Institute. Hong Kong stands ready to play a full role in promoting global I&T collaboration.

Hong Kong: an Ideal Home to I&T enterprises and start-ups

In fact, Hong Kong stands in a prime location for I&T and business collaborations. With the distinctive advantages of "one country, two systems", over 1 400 companies from outside Hong Kong have set up regional headquarters in Hong Kong, including some global tech giants. Our strategic location and unique role as a "super-connector" and "super value-adder" empower them to tap into the vast markets of Mainland China including the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the Asia-Pacific region and also the Belt-and-Road countries.

Hong Kong is also an ideal home for breeding I&T start-ups. According to the Global Start-up Ecosystem Report 2024, Hong Kong ranks first in Asia and third globally among the top 100 emerging ecosystems. As of 2024, the number of start-ups in Hong Kong has surged to about 4 700, reaching the record highs.

Our two I&T flagships, the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation and the digital tech-oriented Cyberport, provide robust support for start-ups through various incubation programmes. They also offer opportunities for start-ups to participate in I&T mega events, which include, of course, the MWC Barcelona. If you are interested in discovering Hong Kong's vibrant I&T scene, be sure to visit the Hong Kong Tech Pavilion at Hall 6 and speak to our tech ventures there.

Concluding remarks

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope my sharing just now could vividly show the colours of Hong Kong's I&T scene, just like the beautiful city of Barcelona. Seeing is believing. I welcome you all to Hong Kong to explore more on our robust digital infrastructure, smart city initiatives and digital economy development.

Before I close, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to GSMA for inviting me to the Ministerial Programme. I wish everyone here a fruitful exchange. Gracias! Thank you!