

# Speech by SCST at opening ceremony of 39th International Travel Expo Hong Kong and 20th MICE Travel Expo (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, at the opening ceremony of 39th International Travel Expo Hong Kong and 20th MICE Travel Expo today (June 12):

Mr KS Tong (Founder and Managing Director of TKS Exhibition Services, Mr Tong Kam-shing), Dr Peter Lam (Chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board), Director Zhang Dong (Director of the Asia Tourism Exchange Center of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China), Mr Stanley Mok (General Manager of the Macao Government Tourism Office – Hong Kong Representative), Consuls General, friends from the trade, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, everyone. It is my great pleasure to join you all this morning for the opening ceremony of the 39th International Travel Expo Hong Kong, or ITE in short, and the 20th MICE Travel Expo. This is my first time joining this annual event as the Secretary for Culture, Sports, and Tourism, but of course I am no stranger to the ITE. I first joined this event in 2011 as the Deputy Commissioner for Tourism, and I am so very pleased to see so many old friends, all of you are enthusiastic counterparts and stakeholders from the tourism and related sectors, as well as new friends whom may have joined the sector in the last decade or coming from afar. It is an opportune time that we all gather here in Hong Kong – our vibrant metropolis that truly shines as the capital of mega events. My very warm and heartfelt welcome for everyone.

For nearly four decades, the ITE has built and solidifies its reputation as one of the most prominent travel exhibitions in the region, presenting exciting opportunities for industry players to share, exchange and explore the latest trends and tourism offerings. This year, we are thrilled to have 500 exhibitors from some 60 countries and regions joining us. Walking through the Expo is like embarking on a whirlwind tour of the world under one roof.

The theme of the ITE this year is "From Recovery to Development". In line with the theme, please allow me to share some exciting updates on how Hong Kong is bouncing back and moving forward on its tourism journey. With the concerted effort of the Government and industry leaders, we witness a strong resurgence in our tourism sector post-pandemic. In 2024, Hong Kong welcomed about 45 million visitors, representing a year-on-year increase of 31 per cent. The strong rebound underscores the resilience of our tourism industry and Hong Kong's enduring appeal as a world-class travel destination. This year, we are aiming even higher, with 49 million visitors projected, a 10 per cent rise from last year. In the first five months of 2025, we have

already welcomed a total of 20 million visitors, registering a 12 per cent increase over last year, putting us on track to achieve our target of a 10 per cent increase for this year.

This impressive recovery is a strong testament to Hong Kong's diverse, innovative and attractive tourism offerings. We are proud to cater to the wide-ranging preferences of our visitors. From world-class attractions and museums, to our iconic harbour, scenic outdoors, exotic islands, gastronomic diversity and excellence, and festive celebrations, Hong Kong promises an experience like no others. These days, a major highlight is our year-round mega events and happenings, which is what sets us apart from other cities. Just last weekend, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) hosted this year's bigger, better Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races with flying colours. Signature HKTb events like Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival every October, Hong Kong New Year Countdown, and Chinese New Year Celebrations, etc., will definitely be back with new elements and enhanced excitement, so that Hong Kong will feature prominently to draw global attention. For the art and sports lovers among us, internationally renowned events such as Art Basel Hong Kong, Art Central, LIV Golf, ComplexCon making their strong presence in Hong Kong. With the opening of our new Kai Tak Sports Park, Hong Kong's largest-ever state-of-the-art sports infrastructure, in this March, our signature rugby event, Hong Kong Sevens, was staged. Building on that success, we have been hosting a series of mega international and local concerts since April, drawing over 580 000 fans, half of them from outside of Hong Kong. And the momentum continues. Just two days ago, we staged a sold-out Asian Cup qualifying football match (AFC Asian Cup 2027 Qualifiers) of Hong Kong, China vs India in the Kai Tak Stadium, and the atmosphere would make even many European stadiums shy. Our football mania will press on, with Liverpool, AC Milan, Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur taking centre stage at Kai Tak Stadium in late July, followed by the eight competition events of our country's 15th National Games to be hosted right here in November.

On the business tourism front, the Government has been sparing no effort in driving the growth of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions) tourism. Since resumption of normal travel in February 2023, the Hong Kong Tourism Board has successfully secured or helped secure over 2 400 international MICE events to be held in Hong Kong, expected to bring in 570 000 high-value-added overnight MICE visitors to Hong Kong and generate a total spending of about HK\$4.4 billion. Riding on this robust recovery, we will step up our efforts in bringing in even more MICE events, with a view to cementing Hong Kong's status as the region's leading MICE destination.

And we will not stop here, we are working in full steam to strengthen our traditional tourism resources on one hand, and unearth new ones, such as our beautiful islands and country parks where tourists can explore and experience Hong Kong's natural wonders, on the other. Recently, we have announced nine appealing projects to boost tourism, including the Hong Kong Industrial Brand Tourism to showcase the "made-in-Hong Kong" industrial tourism through guided tours to the manufactures home, city walks at the neighbourhood of Old Town Central and Kowloon City, the latter is where the hugely popular movie, "Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In" based on. These

projects are designed to tap into the growing demand for authentic, one-of-a-kind experience, ensuring Hong Kong remains a unique must-visit destination.

Before I close, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all our industry partners for their steadfast support and contribution to our tourism recovery journey. With the collective effort of the Government, our industry and the community in concert, I am confident that we will bring our tourism industry and development to new heights in the years to come.

Once again, please accept my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to join you at the ITE again after all these years. I wish the twin expos another year of resounding success. Thank you.