

# Speech by SCST at Sports Law Conference (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, at the Sports Law Conference today (February 21):

President Roden Tong (President of the Law Society of Hong Kong), Mrs Regina Ip (Convenor of the Non-official Members of the Executive Council and Member of Legislative Council), Vivian, gold medal winner of Paris 2024 Olympic Games (Ms Vivian Kong), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is my great honour to address you at today's Sports Law Conference. First of all, I would like to thank the Law Society of Hong Kong for organising the first mega conference on sports law in Hong Kong.

Today, we gather here to discuss and explore the enormous opportunities that the sports industry may present to both the legal profession and the business community in Hong Kong. I am glad that we have such a big and distinguished group of speakers from the business sector, legal practitioners, and sports professionals, both local and from abroad, to share with us their valuable insights on various aspects of sports.

Hong Kong has always been a city that is passionate about sports. Sports not only promote physical health and well-being but also foster social cohesion. The Government is committed to developing sports in the community, nurturing sports talent, hosting mega sports events, promoting professionalism and developing sports as an industry. Our commitment is evident in the increasing resources that we have devoted to this policy area. In 2024-25, we are spending about \$7.9 billion, which is double of the annual spending of \$3.9 billion 10 years ago.

Our efforts in sports development have borne fruit as we take pride in our athletes' achievements on the global stage. Last summer, Hong Kong athletes achieved remarkable results by capturing two gold and two bronze medals in fencing and swimming at the Paris Olympic Games, attaining the best results in the history of Hong Kong, China thus far. Vivian Kong is here with us today and deserves a big round of applause from us. Our para-athletes also won three gold, four silver, and one bronze medal at the Paralympic Games, setting our best results since 2012.

Earlier this month, I attended with the Chief Executive of Hong Kong the Asian Winter Games at Harbin. I am still overwhelmed by the achievements of our Hong Kong, China team, which made a lot of breakthroughs. Participating in curling and alpine skiing at the Games for the first time, our men's curling team historically made the fourth, and an alpine skier achieved a record 10th place out of a total of 58 participants. The men's ice hockey team also reached the quarterfinals stage for the first time. Although our athletes could not make it to the podium just as yet, I am sure all of us in

this room are proud of their success and in particular the sportsmanship, professionalism and sports ethics demonstrated.

As we celebrate our athletes' achievements, it is important to recognise that their success represents more than just their talents. It reflects also the values that sports can bring to our community. These values go beyond medals, records and scores and can bring a positive impact to the society of Hong Kong. Now, let's take a look at how sports can unlock important values for the Hong Kong community.

First of all, perseverance is the key in the sports world. Our athletes encounter challenges, including injuries, defeats, and intense competitions throughout their career. Only through years of perseverance could they finally reach the international sporting arena. Vivian will agree with me that many of our athletes had to cope with recurring injuries while they gave it their all in the Paris Olympic Games. Having gone through these hardships, our athletes deserve fully our cheers and appreciation. Their perseverance has become an inspiration to many, and the athletes are setting an important role model, encouraging our youths not to give up in the face of obstacles. This is the spirit that empowers us and makes our society more resilient.

Secondly, we promote friendship through sports. Sports serve as a powerful medium for building friendship that transcends cultural, ethnical and geographical barriers. It is through sports that people from around the world come together to promote mutual respect, inclusivity and friendship.

It is also through sports that we take pride in our country and foster a stronger sense of national identity and belonging. As our national athletes continue to excel on the international stage, more and more people in Hong Kong are rooting for them and sharing in their joy of achievements as they bring triumph to the entire nation. We were particularly excited about the Mainland Olympians' visit to Hong Kong after the Paris Olympic Games, where we had the invaluable opportunity to appreciate their sporting skills up close. As the public celebrated our country's achievements together, our national identity and sense of belonging to our country are fortified.

Another important value that we recognise is the commercial opportunities that the sports industry presents. Investments in sports infrastructure, sponsorships, and merchandising contribute to the job creation and business development of Hong Kong. As we promote sports events and activities, we can attract local and international brands, fostering partnerships that add impetus to our economy.

To encourage the commercialisation of sports events, the Government provides matching funds under the "M" Mark System to provide incentives for event organisers to seek sponsorship from commercial organisations. By making the best use of market resources, we believe that the quality of events can be further enhanced, which will help attract more commercial players to the sports ecosystem. This is also conducive to the sustainable development of the sports industry in the long run.

Sports broadcasting is another important aspect in commercialising the sports industry. Given the rise of digital media, the broadcasting right of sports events has become even more valuable. The broadcasting of sports events does not only generate revenue and sponsorships but also increases the visibility of our athletes and the sports themselves. The Government's purchase of the broadcasting right of the Paris Olympic Games and Paralympic Games last year enabled members of the public to enjoy the games on television free of charge and to cheer for the athletes. This undoubtedly has helped generate greater interest in sports in the community.

Meanwhile, sports have played an increasingly important role in driving tourism in Hong Kong. Major sports events, such as the Hong Kong Rugby Sevens hosted every year, attract hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world, showcasing our city's culture, hospitality, and vibrant spirit. By positioning Hong Kong as a centre for major international sports events, we strive to bring in high-level, high-profile sports competitions and support the invitation of star athletes to Hong Kong, which in turn promotes tourism by attracting families, event personnel and officials, as well as spectators from outside Hong Kong to participate in major sports events.

I am sure that, like me, you are all looking forward to the formal opening of Kai Tak Sports Park, KTSP, on the 1st of March, that is, just a week away. And in fact, I just did two phone interviews about Kai Tak Sports Park this morning, on top of the one I gave yesterday. That is why I came a little bit late; I am very sorry about that. As Hong Kong's largest sports infrastructure ever, KTSP will fully unleash the strengths and potential of Hong Kong in hosting high-profile mega sports events and entertainment programmes. Hong Kong sports teams will also have ample opportunities to compete at home turf. Additionally, KTSP will help develop peripheral products, including merchandise sales, venue management, refereeing, training, event co-ordination, etc. We will surely capitalise on the world-class facilities in KTSP in driving the sports development of Hong Kong.

We recognise the importance of fostering sports exchanges and collaborations with the Mainland. This year, in November, Hong Kong will cohost the 15th National Games, and the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the 9th National Special Olympic Games jointly with Guangdong Province and the Macao SAR (Special Administrative Region). Apart from attracting audiences from the Mainland and overseas to Hong Kong, the National Games series of events will allow Hong Kong citizens to participate in and support our team as home spectators. The preparation work of the Games is now in full swing. We will continue to leverage the opportunities to organise more sports exchanges with our Mainland counterparts.

Sports are certainly an exciting area in Hong Kong full of different potential. As the sports industry continues to grow, there is a need to develop a robust legal system that supports fair play and resolves conflicts effectively, thereby promoting professionalism and accountability within the sector. The Chief Executive announced in 2024 Policy Address that the Government would support the industry to launch a pilot scheme on sports dispute resolution in Hong Kong. The availability of a sports dispute

resolution mechanism would help preserve the integrity of sports and maintain a sustainable sporting environment. It is also essential to the advancement of sports development in Hong Kong, where a delay in handling of conflict may have a drastic impact on an athlete's career. My bureau fully supports this initiative, and we look forward to your support and contribution to the pilot scheme.

Ladies and gentlemen, sports have the potential to unlock a wide range of different values that enrich our community and contribute to the growth of Hong Kong. The potential for sports development is truly immense. My team will continue to work with the sports, legal and business sectors to ensure that the sports industry thrives. I am confident that through sports, we can build a stronger, healthier, and more united Hong Kong.

Before I close, I would once again like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Roden and the Law Society of Hong Kong for organising this conference, and all speakers for sharing your insights, which are essential for creating a brighter future for the sports industry.

I wish the conference a big success and your experience here truly rewarding. Thank you.