

Speech by SEE at opening ceremony of 19th Eco Expo Asia

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, at 19th Eco Expo Asia today (October 30):

Secretary Sun (Secretary of the Leading Party Members Group of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China, Mr Sun Jinlong), Margaret (Executive Director of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, Ms Margaret Fong), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

My heartfelt welcome to all of you joining us at the opening of the 19th Eco Expo Asia. This is a golden opportunity for us to discuss and advance our shared commitments to a sustainable future. This year, we are honoured to have about 190 officials from about 40 official delegations from various provinces and cities in Mainland China, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and Belt and Road countries joining this signature annual environmental trade event in Asia.

When people are talking about Hong Kong, what comes into our minds usually is high-rise buildings and very congested streets and roads. But actually we have a lot of well-protected countrysides in Hong Kong. And if you don't know, I tell you that we are very rich in biodiversity. The number of coral species in our sea is more than the entire Caribbean Sea. Well, surprised? Therefore, we have produced two documentaries, "Beautiful Hong Kong" and also "Enchanting China" so as to bring the very beautiful scenes of our motherland and natural Hong Kong to the world. What you have just seen is just an extract only, and I encourage all of you to enjoy the full version that would be screened at our booth at this Expo which would tell you more about our efforts and achievements in pollution prevention, ecological protection, and nature conservation.

This year, the theme of Eco Expo Asia is "Fostering Green Innovations for Carbon Neutrality". Our country places a lot of importance on climate change and therefore sets targets to achieve peak carbon emissions before 2030 and also strives to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. As to Hong Kong, our carbon emissions peaked in 2014, and compared to the peak, our carbon emissions today have been reduced by about a quarter already. Actually our carbon emissions per capita is only about one quarter of the United States, and about 60 per cent of the European Union. And therefore we have set an interim target, to cut our carbon emissions by half before 2035 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2050.

We have been striving to achieve these targets through implementing our Climate Action Plan 2050 in Hong Kong, which covers four major decarbonisation strategies, namely aiming to achieve net-zero electricity generation, promote green buildings and also energy efficiency, promote green

transport, as well as manage our waste reduction. In terms of green transport, I can tell you that now out of 10 newly registered vehicles in Hong Kong, seven are electric. And therefore I think we are moving at a reasonable speed.

Looking ahead, we will continue to harness the transformative power of innovation and technology to accelerate the growth of green and low-carbon transformation through supporting the development of green industry, promoting development of new energy and more importantly, facilitating green research and development projects with application potentials to transform into commercially valuable products through various measures.

On green tech, we are supporting relevant research and development through various initiatives and funding schemes, including the Innovation and Technology Fund, Green Tech Fund, New Energy Transport Fund, etc. Over HK\$800 million has been approved from these funds for a few hundred research and development and pilot projects in net-zero electricity generation, energy saving, green buildings, green transport, and more.

Turning to new energy, our Chief Executive has announced in his Policy Address earlier this month, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government is committed to further promote the development of new energy including setting a target for sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) consumption, developing SAF and green maritime fuel supply chains, and promoting green and low-carbon energy such as hydrogen.

Hydrogen is regarded as a low-carbon energy with development potential in the course of energy transition. To prepare for possible wider application of hydrogen energy, the Hong Kong SAR Government published the Strategy of Hydrogen Development in Hong Kong in June this year. The Strategy sets out the four major strategies of improving legislations, establishing standards, aligning with the market, and advancing with prudence to create an environment conducive to the development of hydrogen energy in Hong Kong in a prudent and orderly manner, so that we would be able to capitalise on the environmental and economic opportunities brought about by the recent developments of hydrogen energy in different parts of the world.

While the scarcity of land resources has made it difficult for the development of a major manufacturing base for green energy as well as green technologies in Hong Kong, we are determined to leverage our position as a "super connector" and a "super value-adder" to serve as the platform for green and low-carbon technologies to facilitate their application in other parts of the world. For instance, we have supported the development of Hong Kong's first green hydrogen production demonstration project at a landfill which is scheduled for commencement next year, and we are also facilitating the industry to establish a solar-to-hydrogen facility in Hong Kong very soon.

Ladies and gentlemen, decarbonisation cannot wait. Different regions around the world have suffered the devastating consequences of extreme weather events. Heatwaves, severe droughts, extreme rainfall, and extreme storms have attacked every corner of our planet. This year, Hong Kong

experienced the hottest ever mid-autumn festival. These events remind us that climate change is indeed a current-day reality. The world must take urgent actions to combat climate change together.

Decarbonisation implies transformational change. Green innovation solutions are of paramount importance in our decarbonisation journey. During Eco Expo Asia, we will see the latest innovation and technologies and products around the world in new energy, climate adaptation and other areas.

Last but not least, I thank you again for coming today. Together, we can drive global sustainability. I hope you will find the Expo and the three-day Eco Asia Conference inspiring. For friends who come from abroad and across the boundary, I wish you all an enjoyable stay in Hong Kong, and spend more money. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the speech.)