

Speech by CE at SCMP China Conference Hong Kong 2023 (English only) (with photo/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the South China Morning Post (SCMP) China Conference Hong Kong 2023 today (June 20):

Ms Catherine So (Chief Executive Officer of the South China Morning Post), Ms Tammy Tam (Editor-in-Chief of the South China Morning Post), Mr Patrick Graham (Chief Executive Officer of the Manulife Hong Kong & Macau), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I'm very delighted to be here today for the SCMP China Conference, which shines a bright spotlight on our country and its long-term promise for Hong Kong.

When I spoke to you at last year's conference, I have only assumed the office of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region for less than a month. I stressed that the Government under my leadership would be a "results-oriented" one.

One year on, as we approach this Government's first anniversary, allow me to touch on a few areas that speak to our belief in the primacy of "results", our pledge to work "pragmatically, and passionately, for Hong Kong – and our country".

Attracting talents and enterprises

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, Hong Kong is striving our best to make up for lost time.

I outlined in my Policy Address last October an array of new and unprecedented initiatives to proactively and aggressively compete for enterprises and talents. To get things done. To achieve results.

We introduced the Top Talent Pass Scheme and enhanced various talent schemes about half a year ago. The enhanced talent admission regime had received, in half a year, 84 000 applications by the end of May, and we've approved some 49 000 of them. This is solid proof of Hong Kong's attractiveness for global talents to come and settle, live and work in.

The new Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises has already met more than 150 enterprises from around the world in just the past six months. We aim to attract at least 1 130 companies to set up or expand their operations in Hong Kong from 2023 to 2025.

By the way, that 49 000 approved talents means what? I set a target of attracting 35 000 talents a year, that 49 000 means I have beat it almost by a double, by the end of the year, looking at this trend. That tells Hong Kong's attractiveness.

Telling good stories of Hong Kong

The pandemic has made it a global trend to "work from home", and in many aspects, working from home has proven to improve work efficiency. However, my team and I don't just "work from home" in attracting talents and enterprises. We have travelled abroad to tell the world that Hong Kong is back in business, back in the business of creating opportunities, back on the world's centre stage.

Last November, I made my first visit overseas as the Chief Executive. At the annual APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) Economic Leaders' Meeting and my subsequent visit to Thailand, I reassured our trading partners of Hong Kong's commitment to regional economic co-operation. More importantly, I told the business and political leaders there about the uniqueness of Hong Kong, where the China advantage and the global advantage converge in a single city.

In February, I visited Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The Middle East is an area of increasing importance to the Belt and Road Initiative, a key national strategy personally launched by President Xi Jinping 10 years ago. During my visit, we signed 13 MOUs (memoranda of understanding) and co-operation letters of intent. The Dubai Chambers announced the establishment of a new office in Hong Kong.

We kept seeing good results of stronger relations between Hong Kong and the Middle East. Just yesterday, the Future Investment Initiative Institute, which is headquartered in Saudi Arabia, announced that it will host its inaugural PRIORITY Asia Summit in Hong Kong this December.

Since our visits, I have personally welcomed potential investors from Thailand, the Middle East and other economies. I am pleased to note that many of them have shown keen interest in investing in Hong Kong.

Maintaining Hong Kong's international status and connections

Hong Kong's presence in international organisations is important to our status as a cosmopolitan city, as well as our continuous growth as one of the world's freest economies.

Since 1997, we have continued as a separate member of WTO (World Trade Organization) and APEC respectively under the name "Hong Kong, China". This is another piece of solid evidence that shows the Central Government's strong and long-standing support for Hong Kong to maintain its role as an international city, under the unique principle of "one country, two systems".

In just the past two months, four of the principal officials on my team travelled to different parts of the world to take part in important

international conferences on behalf of Hong Kong. The Secretary for Labour and Welfare was in Geneva for the International Labour Conference. The Secretary for Health was also in Geneva for the WHO (World Health Organization)'s World Health Assembly. The Secretary for Transport and Logistics and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development were in Detroit for APEC ministerial meetings.

The Commerce Secretary also travelled to Paris for the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)'s annual Ministerial Council Meeting. At the trade session, he spoke of the importance of fighting against protectionism, highlighting Hong Kong's experience in enabling SMEs (small and medium enterprises) to drive sustainable economic development.

Continued commitment to regional co-operation

Hong Kong champions multilateralism and accords high priority to establishing partnership with different economies.

Later this summer, I will lead a high-profile business delegation to a number of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries. ASEAN is the world's fifth-largest economy and has been Hong Kong's second-largest trade partner since 2010. This visit will be a welcome opportunity to highlight, to our partners in this fast-growing regional bloc, Hong Kong's manifold advantages as the gateway to the Mainland, especially the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

It is an opportune time to underline our strengths in regional economic development, and the wide-ranging benefits we can bring, both to ASEAN economies and to RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership), on our proposed accession to the world's largest free trade agreement.

Ladies and gentlemen, Hong Kong people are known for their benevolence. Just as how we are committed to promoting mutual prosperity, Hong Kong actively contributes to our country's work in global governance and lends its helping hand to those in need in the global community.

Following the severe earthquakes in Türkiye earlier this year, we sent a 59-strong search and rescue team from Hong Kong all the way to Türkiye's quake-stricken areas. The team's valiant effort has helped to save four precious lives. We will continue our liaison with the relevant authorities of the United Nations, on Hong Kong's establishment of a medium urban search and rescue team for different missions.

Growing Hong Kong's budding strengths

As Hong Kong embarks on the journey from stability to prosperity, we are working to fully unleash our great potential in development in a variety of budding sectors.

Innovation and technology is a policy priority of this term of the Government, and the results are encouraging. In the 2023 IMD (International

Institute for Management Development) Smart City Index, Hong Kong finished 19th out of 141 cities. That's up from 38th place in the previous Index, I'm pleased to note.

The Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Guangzhou science and technology cluster has been ranked second globally for three consecutive years in the Global Innovation Index. This highlights the strength of complementarity among GBA cities.

This year, we've signed I&T (innovation and technology) co-operation agreements with Shenzhen, Guangdong and Chongqing. More importantly, we have signed, in March, an arrangement with the Mainland's Ministry of Science and Technology, that will expedite Hong Kong's development as an international I&T centre.

Consolidating Hong Kong's traditional strengths

When it comes to finance, Hong Kong has long been a global leader. Thanks to the 14th Five-Year Plan, our status as an international financial centre and the world's largest offshore Renminbi hub is primed for continuing growth.

Over the past year, Stock Connect has been expanded to include stocks of foreign companies primary listed in Hong Kong under southbound trading and Exchange-traded Funds. Last month, we welcomed the launch of Swap Connect's northbound trading.

Just yesterday, HKEX (Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited) introduced a "Hong Kong Dollar-Renminbi dual counter model" and "dual counter market maker". This allows investors to trade the same listed security in both Hong Kong Dollars and Renminbi.

This term of the Government sees promises, too, in financial technology and virtual assets, which draw together our traditional strengths in finance and Hong Kong's burgeoning I&T sector. Our new licensing regime for virtual assets service providers began operation this month. That makes Hong Kong among the world's first authorities to introduce a comprehensive regime regulating virtual asset activities. We are committed to ensuring investor protection and market integrity, while managing key risks to financial institutions and encouraging more investors.

In short, the Government is committed to innovative financial and economic development, to pursuing opportunities, wherever they arise.

Closing remarks

Ladies and gentlemen, life in Hong Kong is back to the business, and many pleasures, of entertainment as well. In recent months, we've hosted the Rugby Sevens and the largest Art Basel Hong Kong since 2019. The Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races is returning to Victoria Harbour later this week, in celebration of the Dragon Boat Festival. Also coming to the harbourfront is the brand-new Harbour Chill Carnival, which opens on July 8

in Wan Chai, and will be making a splash with live shows and refreshments for five weekends in a row.

And we're just getting going, ladies and gentlemen. I am a believer. That's why I've stated in my election manifesto a year ago that we will be "starting a new chapter for Hong Kong together".

About working together, I feel obliged to point out that both my visits to Thailand and the Middle East were joined by leaders of Hong Kong's business and professional sectors. This shows their passion for Hong Kong and a high level of team spirit. A clear sense of "togetherness" of the whole community, from both the public and private sectors.

We are all living in a world with growing volatility and tensions in geopolitics. We in Hong Kong must stay united in telling the world all about the good stories of Hong Kong.

Together, we can make a better future for Hong Kong, for our country, and for the world.

A supplement to what has been described as Hong Kong's strength, a super-connector. Yes, we are, but we are more than a super-connector. We are a value-added super-connector. We have professional services. We have a lot of professional workforce. So we don't just connect, we add value. We help people to grow and we help people to thrive. We help people to know the way and be successful.

My thanks to the South China Morning Post for this annual global gathering. I wish you all a rewarding conference and the best of business in the coming year.

Thank you very much.



HKMA supports launch of bank-to-bank information sharing platform

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), the Hong Kong Association of Banks (HKAB) and the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) announced today (June 20) the launch of the Financial Intelligence Evaluation Sharing Tool (FINEST), a bank-to-bank information sharing platform. This initiative helps increase banks' ability to share information for detecting and disrupting fraud and mule account networks more effectively, thereby giving the public greater protection from fraud and financial crimes and enhancing the integrity of the banking system.

The initiative is developed by the HKAB, with guidance from the HKMA, and support from the HKPF for a cyber-secured platform to speed up the bank-to-bank sharing. It is the HKMA's 2023 work priority (Note 1) as well as one of the five joint anti-deception initiatives announced recently by the HKMA and the HKPF (Note 2). Enhancing the ability to share information directly among banks is internationally recognised as an effective means to help manage and mitigate increasingly sophisticated fraud and money laundering risks.

FINEST will be rolled out in phases. The pilot phase involves five domestic systemically important Authorized Institutions (D-SIBs) (Note 3) and focuses on sharing of information related to corporates suspected to be involved in fraud-related money laundering activities. Based on the experience gained from the pilot phase and any new issues addressed, the platform will be expanded by phases in future, to include more participating banks and cover personal accounts as well as share other financial crime-related information such as trade-based money laundering. The HKMA will continue to work closely with banks and the HKPF to enhance the ecosystem response to the evolving nature of fraud and financial crime.

The Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Eddie Yue, said, "This collaborative platform demonstrates that banks, the HKMA and the HKPF share a common purpose to turn the tables on fraud and financial crime, with a view to offering better protection to the public. Bank-to-bank information sharing, when combined with data analytics, can be a game changer in the fight against abuse of our banking system for fraud."

Note 1: One of the HKMA's key work priorities in 2023 for the banking sector is to detect, deter and disrupt money laundering, fraud and financial crime. (www.hkma.gov.hk/media/eng/doc/key-information/speeches/s20230217e1.pdf).

Note 2: The HKMA and the HKPF co-hosted a sharing session with banking industry on anti-deception efforts on April 21, 2023 (www.hkma.gov.hk/eng/news-and-media/press-releases/2023/04/20230421-7).

Note 3: Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited, Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Limited, The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, Hang Seng Bank Limited and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Asia) Limited.

Celebrating HKSAR's 26th anniversary with all

To celebrate the 26th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China, the HKSAR Government and different sectors of the community will roll out a rich array of special offers, covering areas including dining, arts and culture, sports, environmental protection, fisheries and agriculture, and transport, for members of the public to enjoy the festive ambience and share the joy of Hong Kong's return to the motherland.

The public will be offered free admission to a range of fee-charging leisure and cultural facilities of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and to the Hong Kong Wetland Park under the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department on July 1. Free admission will also be offered to M+ and seven thematic exhibitions of the Hong Kong Palace Museum (Gallery 1 to 7) in the West Kowloon Cultural District. Furthermore, free guided tours, free workshops, etc, will be arranged or enhanced on July 1 or a nearby date for the 12 projects under the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme of the Commissioner for Heritage's Office.

Meanwhile, members of the public can enjoy a 29 per cent discount when purchasing designated products from the Fish Marketing Organization and the Vegetable Marketing Organization via the "Local Fresh" mobile app from July 1 to 7. The Environmental Protection Department's community recycling network, GREEN@COMMUNITY, will offer additional GREEN\$ to the general public who recycle via the network or participate in food waste recycling using smart recycling bins throughout the month of July.

As for the catering industry, more than 1 000 restaurants are expected to offer a 29 per cent discount on designated cuisines or catering items on July 1.

Apart from government departments and the catering industry, different organisations and sectors have actively organised a range of celebratory events to share the joy of this special occasion. Among them, free rides on all tram routes and certain ferry routes will be offered to the public on specified dates. The Airport Authority Hong Kong will also distribute souvenirs to travellers. Details of the special offers available on July 1 are listed in the Annex. Relevant government departments or organisations will make further announcements on the special offers in due course.

The HKSAR Government thanks the catering industry and various organisations for providing the above special offers, with a view to bringing celebratory ambience to the 26th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR around town.

Members of the public are welcome to visit the dedicated website www.hksar26.gov.hk for the latest information about the celebratory events of the HKSAR's 26th anniversary.

Free use of leisure and cultural facilities on July 1 in celebration of 26th anniversary of establishment of HKSAR

To celebrate the 26th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), members of the public may use most of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD)'s fee-charging leisure and cultural facilities for free as individual users on July 1 (Saturday). The event aims at encouraging people to participate in various sport and cultural activities and thereby form good habits, as well as sharing the joy of the special occasion.

Members of the public can make bookings at the Leisure Link booking counters at LCSD venues (except self-service kiosks) and via Internet booking from 7am on June 25 (Sunday) onwards, on a first-come, first-served basis, for the free use on July 1 of the available leisure facilities that are not taken up by block bookings (the Leisure Link booking counter services at Tuen Mun Recreation and Sports Centre will start from 7.30am while water sports centres will start from 8.30am).

The leisure facilities to be available for free use on July 1 include:

- Indoor leisure facilities: badminton courts, tennis courts, basketball courts, netball courts, volleyball courts, squash courts, table tennis tables, American pool tables, billiard tables, sport climbing walls, bowling greens, golf facilities, fitness rooms*, activity rooms, dance rooms and a cycling track*;
- Outdoor leisure facilities: tennis courts, tennis practice courts, bowling greens, batting cages, sport climbing walls*, archery ranges* and golf facilities (excluding camp facilities, sports grounds and artificial as well as natural turf pitches);
- Public swimming pools (excluding Wan Chai Swimming Pool, and Kowloon Tsai Swimming Pool which is temporarily closed for redevelopment); and

- Craft at water sports centres* (recreational kayaks, pedal-driven boats, sampans and colour boats at Chong Hing Water Sports Centre are available for free use by campers only).

* Citizens who book these types of facilities must hold the relevant qualification certificates. For details, please visit the thematic website at www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/freeuseday/conditions.html.

Each person can only book one free session irrespective of the type of leisure facility. Overbooking of facilities will be declined automatically by Leisure Link. Due to the anticipated high use of online booking services by the public, it may take a longer time for users to log into the system for booking during peak hours in the morning.

â€‹ No prior booking is required for public swimming pool facilities. Members of the public may line up at the entrances of swimming pools before the start of a session. Free admission is offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

The LCSD appeals to hirers to arrive on time and make the best use of the booked facilities. If a hirer fails to take up a booked session 10 minutes after the starting time, the facility will immediately be reallocated to walk-in participants on a first-come, first-served basis. The facility shall be used for the same purpose as that for which it had been booked by the original hirer. The user shall surrender the facility to the original hirer immediately upon the latter's arrival.

All users of the leisure facilities shall observe the Conditions of Use of LCSD Recreation and Sports Facilities (www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/condition/index.html), including the no-show/not present during the use of the booked sessions ("not present") penalty. A no-show/"not present" record will be filed on the hirer when he or she fails to take up a session as booked without on-time completion of the cancellation procedure, or is not present during the use of the booked sessions. Any two such records within 60 consecutive days will result in suspension of booking rights for any of the LCSD's fee-charging recreation and sports facilities for 90 days.

Please call 2414 5555 for enquiry or visit the thematic website at www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/freeuseday/index.html.

For cultural services, free admission will be offered to the permanent exhibitions of the Hong Kong Science Museum and the Hong Kong Space Museum (except for the Space Theatre's shows) as well as various special exhibitions including the "Virtually Versailles" exhibition and "Out of Thin Air: Hong Kong Film Arts & Costumes Exhibition" being held at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, "Material Tales – The Life of Things" exhibition at the Hong Kong Science Museum and "The Hong Kong Jockey Club Series: Joan Miró – The Poetry of Everyday Life" exhibition at the Hong Kong Museum of Art on July 1.

A range of delightful free exhibitions are also available at the Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Hong Kong Museum of History, Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum, Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware, Hong Kong Railway

Museum, Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence, Fireboat Alexander Grantham Exhibition Gallery, Law Uk Folk Museum, Lei Cheng Uk Han Tomb Museum, Sheung Yiu Folk Museum, Hong Kong Film Archive, Sam Tung Uk Museum, Oil Street Art Space (Oi!) and Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre that day. Members of the public are welcome to visit to share the joy on this special occasion.

[SCED continues visit in Japan \(with photos\)](#)

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, today (June 20) continued his visit in Tokyo, Japan, and met with a number of Japanese business leaders and government officials to promote Hong Kong's unique advantages and potentials as well as the immense opportunities brought about by the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development.

He stressed that with the "one country, two systems" principle, underpinned by an open and free market, a fine tradition of the rule of law, Hong Kong continues to be recognised as the world's freest economy with the best investment environment, a global financial centre and one of the most competitive economies around the globe.

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He welcomed the Japanese political and business leaders to visit Hong Kong to learn about its latest developments and favourable business environment, and also experience the vibrancy of the city.

Meanwhile, he reiterated that Hong Kong's early accession to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) would definitely further strengthen the already close economic and mutually beneficial relations with Japan, and deepen co-operation with the RCEP economies in the region.

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During his visit today, Mr Yau first had a breakfast meeting with key business partners from various sectors and met with the Chairman of Japan External Trade Organization, Mr Ishiguro Norihiko, to keep them abreast of the latest trade and economic developments in Hong Kong as well as the new measures for attracting enterprises and investment.

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He then proceeded to visit NEC Corporation (NEC) which is a renowned multinational information technology and electronics company. He met with the Executive Advisor of NEC, Dr Nobuhiro Endo, who is also the Vice Chair of Keidanren (Japan Business Federation), to exchange views on enhancing business co-operation between Hong Kong and Japan.

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In the afternoon, Mr Yau met with State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan Ms Fusae Ota, and State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan Mr Shunsuke Takei, to give them an update on Hong Kong's latest

developments and exchange views on promoting closer bilateral relation and deepening regional co-operation.

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Mr Yau was also invited to attend a media luncheon of "World of Winners" ticket giveaway launch in Japan organised by the Airport Authority Hong Kong in support of the "Hello Hong Kong" Campaign.

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Mr Yau will return to Hong Kong tomorrow morning (June 21).

