

## SCED speaks on Individual Visit Scheme

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Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, to the media on the Individual Visit Scheme after attending the press conference of the public consultation on the proposed new Digital 21 Strategy today (September 18):

Reporter: Mr So, can you explain, is there any truth in the report about expanding the individual traveller scheme to three more Mainland cities? And do you see that this is more of a political issue now rather than just a tourism issue where maybe Mainland visitors are not really welcomed in Hong Kong?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I don't want to elevate the issue into a political one. To me, people in Hong Kong are very hospitable; people in Hong Kong welcome visitors. And there is a balance that we need to strike between developing a very robust tourism sector and as well to see whether we have the capability, the capacity, to take in a certain number of visitors. We have a very small area in Hong Kong and we need to maximise our usage for it, and we don't want to interfere with the livelihood, the living environment, of the people, so we need to be very careful in striking a healthy balance in that. I think the solution must lie in the fact that we need to expand our capacity so that we can take in visitors, allowing them to have a very positive experience in Hong Kong.

Reporter: What about the truth to the expansion of the three cities?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: There is no truth in what was reported today. There is no current plan to expand the number of cities under the Individual Visit Scheme to Hong Kong. I would clarify that at this time.

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

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