

The 18th Hong Kong International Travel Expo (ITE HK 2004)
Opening Ceremony
Hall 5, Level 5, HKCEC (Old Wing)
10 June 2004, 11 am

Speech by Ms Eva Cheng,
Acting Permanent Secretary for Economic Development

Stanley, Howard [Young], ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you at the opening ceremony of the 18th Hong Kong International Travel Expo. Let me extend a very warm welcome to you all to Asia's World City! It is always a great pleasure to be at the ITE.

2. Over the past 18 years, the ITE has gained a formidable reputation as the leading travel expo in Asia. This year, more than 500 exhibitors from over 70 destinations around the world are gathered here to hold promotions and to reach out to their business partners.

3. We are all encouraged to see the recent strong performance of the tourism industry and the benefits brought about to the retail sector and the whole economy of Hong Kong, despite the unprecedented challenges posed by health and security threats. Our revival is due in no small measure to the perseverance and versatility of our tourism sector. Behind each colourful exhibition booth and each destination brand name there are committed men and women who have weathered many storms and working hard to ensure the

continued growth of our tourism industry.

4. The challenges faced by our industry are enormous. The World Tourism Organisation has given us three pointers. First is the accelerating changes in traveling patterns. With the insecurity of travel, be they perceived or real, there is no doubt that the future of tourism lies in intra-regional travel with a growing preference for short break vacations close to one's home. According to the WTO, about 80% of the international tourist arrivals in 2003 were short-haul regional travels. We must work together to capitalize on this increasing trend. Our Tourism Board is ever ready to work with their partners to encourage new products for this form of travel.

5. Secondly, success must be built on the strengthened partnership between private and public sectors. Hong Kong for one has first hand experience in the tremendous benefits brought about by such partnership. Our very effective tourism revival campaign after SARS would not have been possible without the very close public and private co-operation that has engendered. Many of Hong Kong's new projects are undertaken by the private sector, with Government facilitation. "A Symphony of Lights" - the world's first ever multimedia light and sound show with a harbour setting, the newly opened Avenue of Stars, our Former Marine Police Headquarters, now rebuilt into a heritage hotel, are recent and prominent examples.

6. Thirdly, WTO reminds us that competition is the key driving force of change. One key development is the use of information

technology which has brought ever closer the distance between travellers and a destination. Travellers can enjoy just over the internet a full array of tourism products and prices. The competition among destinations is intensified and become globalised. I am sure you will feel the heat of competition as you walk round the exhibition hall. We understand that we cannot rest on our laurels so Hong Kong is continuing to invest in our hard and software. New projects coming on stream include Disneyland, a new cable car system on Lantau Island and Asia's largest man-made wetland park. We will also work together with the industry to enhance our quality of service.

7. I mentioned earlier that it is always a great pleasure to be at the ITE. The pleasure comes from being around partners and competitors, from learning about the latest trends and products, and of course all the necessary information to plan our next holiday!

8. I would like to congratulate the organizers for another job very well done. I wish the 18th Hong Kong International Travel Expo a great success and all of you a fruitful and enjoyable stay in Hong Kong. Thank you.

Tourism Commission
June 2004