

**Speech by the Commissioner for Tourism, Ms Eva Cheng
at the HKIA 50th Anniversary –
the First Quarterly General Meeting on 15 March 2006**

* * * * *

The Honourable Patrick Lau, Mr Lim, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for inviting me to your quarterly meeting. I do not have a formal speech but have prepared some remarks to share with you.

When I was preparing for today's meeting, I went to the on-line library to search for books on "architecture and tourism". Alas, the search brought up 3624 books. So I concluded, even without actually reading over them, that this must be a well researched subject. If it is a well-trodden path then I need not go down this route today. Except the more I think about it, the more I am convinced that all architects are also keen tourists. Tourists and architects are both aesthetically astute, look at beautiful things that belong to other people, must work within a certain budget, and whatever nice things they do, it is only for a limited time and they must go home at some point to face reality.

I realized that the HKIA must be inviting me here for a purpose and it dawned on me as I go over Frank Lloyd Wright's famous saying "Maybe we can show government how to operate better as a result of better architecture".

Before you tell me how we can do better let me explain what the role of the Tourism Commission is.

Very simply we are the one-stop shop in Government dealing with tourism – policy formulation, investment in tourism infrastructure, regulation of the travel industry and fostering a hospitable culture in Hong Kong. We however do not take care of promotion and marketing. That is the statutory function of the Hong Kong Tourism Board under the able chairmanship of Mrs Selina Chow.

It is not possible for me to go into each and every facet of the Tourism Commission's work today. However, I wish to highlight the importance of public private partnership quoting a few projects we have endeavoured recently. And for each and every one of them, great architecture has a lot to do with their success.

"A Symphony of Lights" is a mega multi-media light and sound show featuring architectural lights and musical effects that showcases the night vista and vibrancy of the Victoria Harbour. It was awarded "the world's largest permanent light and sound show" and now covers 33 buildings on both sides of the harbour. It has been made possible because of the community spirit of the participating buildings as all fixtures and operating cost is borne by them. It is a very creative project and at the centre stage are the iconic buildings of this town. For the first time we see the power of LED, cold cathode lights, search lights, flood lights, fibre optics, lasers....working on these buildings in concert, to turn the Victoria Harbour into a performing stage every night at 8 o'clock.

The Avenue of Stars is another good example of public private partnership. It is a design-and-manage arrangement whereby the private sponsor donated the capital cost in return for a 20 year management contract at nominal value. Apart from being a very popular place to hang out for tourists and locals, it is also now a popular venue for outdoor performances. Our Architectural Services Department is working very hard to extend the ambience to the whole of the promenade along the TST waterfront through the beautification project which will complete in phases in around the middle of this year.

The city is of course a highlight for tourists but there are a lot of hidden treasures in Hong Kong's beautiful countryside. The Wisdom Path at Ngong Ping, completed last year, is a unique project that combines the arts, culture, philosophy and outdoor architecture. From inception to implementation, we have worked closely with Professor Jao Tsung I and a team of experts from the University of Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong Wetland Park, due to open later this year is

another unique project that brings together conservation, education and green tourism. The architectural design blends in with the environment and creates 10 000 m² of exhibition space, complemented by some 60 ha of outdoor wetlands, to provide a once in a life time experience for visitors.

Ladies and gentlemen I do not think time permits me to go into all the interesting projects we have undertaken or will embark on. For example, you will have noticed I have not covered subjects like the Central Police Station or the Cruise terminal. Don't worry as I am sure Patrick and Bernard will watch over us carefully to make sure we go the right way because they are good architects that can teach us about good government.

Finally may I use Principle No. 4 from your Code of Conduct to end my remarks. "A member shall endeavour to promote architectural excellence through his/her work and by the encouragement of others."

I look forward to your continuous encouragement. Thank you.

- End -