

Speech by Commissioner for Tourism at opening ceremony of 25th International Travel Expo and 6th MICE, Business and Incentive Travel Expo (English only)

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Following is a speech by the Commissioner for Tourism, Mr Philip Yung, at the opening ceremony of the 25th International Travel Expo (ITE) and the 6th MICE, Business and Incentive Travel Expo, this morning (June 9):

KS, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here this morning to open the 25th International Travel Expo and the 6th MICE, Business and Incentive Travel Expo. This is an important occasion, as it marks the ITE's silver jubilee anniversary.

2010 was a very fruitful year for Hong Kong tourism. We welcomed a record 36 million visitors for the year, representing a staggering 22% rise over 2009. Many of them were MICE participants. Our outbound tourism also performed well. Visitor arrivals from both the Mainland and overseas markets continued to increase in the first five months of this year. Indeed, Hong Kong has recently been voted as one of the top ten travel destinations in the world and the best in Asia in the Travellers' Choice Destination awards by Trip Advisor.

Both external and internal factors account for this achievement. The improving global economy and travel sentiment, favourable exchange rate, increased capacity of flights, and expansion of the scope of the Individual Visit Scheme for Mainland visitors created a very positive environment for our tourism industry. At the same time, we have spared no effort in our marketing activities. The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) continues to promote Hong Kong to the rest of the world. On top of major markets like Mainland China, the United States and Europe, the HKTB is also stepping up promotion in emerging markets like Russia, India and the Middle East to enhance our market penetration and capture new growth opportunities.

From the government perspective, we fully recognise the importance of tourism as one of the four pillars of our economy. We have been investing heavily in the development of new attractions and improvement of existing ones in response to market changes. For example, our two theme parks, Ocean Park and Hong Kong Disneyland, have been implementing a series of expansion projects. Early this year, Ocean Park opened the new Aqua City, which is home to one of the largest aquaria in the world. Another new attraction, the Rainforest, will be unveiled next week. Hong

Kong Disneyland will add three new themed areas to the park in phases by 2013. The first one, Toy Story Land, is planned for completion by the end of this year.

In addition, to maintain Hong Kong as a regional cruise hub, the Government has funded the construction of an iconic cruise terminal at the former Kai Tak airport runway. The terminal building and first berth will commence operation in mid-2013. I invite you to visit the booth of the HKTB to find out more about our cruise terminal. Please also feel free to discuss with us if you are interested in expanding your business on this front.

Tourism is always a vibrant sector, with lots of opportunities and challenges. I am very encouraged to see that we have many long-standing partners, like the International Travel Expo, which has been with us for a quarter of a century, and has become one of our flagship trade events, providing an excellent platform for different market players and the public to learn the latest trends of the industry and reach business deals. I am confident that the ITE will scale newer heights in the years to come.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for taking part in this event. You have four very busy days ahead. But please don't forget to find time to enjoy our diverse attractions and latest summer offers. On this note, I wish you all a successful expo and a wonderful stay in Hong Kong. Thank you.

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