

Speech by SCED at opening ceremony of 30th International Travel Expo Hong Kong and 11th MICE Travel Expo (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, at the opening ceremony of the 30th International Travel Expo Hong Kong and the 11th MICE Travel Expo today (June 16):

K S (Managing Director of TKS Exhibition Services Limited, Mr K S Tong), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. A very warm welcome to everyone, especially to those who have travelled long distances to be with us today. I am particularly pleased to see so many friends returning to the Expo year after year.

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 the past three decades, and has become one of our flagship trade events. This Expo has gained a reputation for providing an excellent platform for industry players to expand their business contacts and showcase the latest products and services. I am glad to learn that this year, more than 600 exhibitors from 50 countries and regions around the world are gathering here to reach out to their business partners.

The HKSAR Government attaches great importance to the healthy and sustainable development of our tourism industry and has been working hard to promote our status as a premier travel destination in the region. After many years of rapid growth in the tourist arrivals, we recognise that our tourism industry should pursue balanced, healthy and long-term development towards product diversification and high value-added services. Our goal is to strive for more diversified visitor source markets and attract more high-spending overnight visitors to Hong Kong.

In the light of this, we have stepped up our promotion work in the overseas and Mainland markets, and these measures have begun to deliver results. For instance, our overnight non-Mainland arrivals recorded a positive growth of 7.8 per cent in the first four months of this year. To keep up the momentum, the Government will launch a series of support measures this year, amounting to \$240 million in total, to reduce the industry's costs of operation and enhance Hong Kong's attractiveness and competitiveness. One exciting measure is the expansion of major events in Hong Kong.

For instance, to promote Hong Kong's unique gourmet culture, the Hong Kong Tourism Board will expand its annual Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival to be held in end-October. The FIA Formula E Championship will be held in Hong Kong for the first time in October. The Tourism Board will introduce the October Sports Month, during which a series of exciting sports events will be highlighted. You are most welcome to return to Hong Kong in October to enjoy the sportive side of this city.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish the Expo every success and you all good business. When the deals are done, I suggest you all celebrate by soaking in the sights and sounds of Hong Kong - our vibrant city life, the fabulous night scenes and the legendary shopping bargains. And I look forward to welcoming you all back this time next year to the 31st International Travel Expo.

Thank you.

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