

Speech by SCED at World Travel Awards Asia & Australasia Gala Ceremony 2018
(English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, at the World Travel Awards Asia & Australasia Gala Ceremony 2018 today (September 3):

Mr Cooke (President and Founder of World Travel Awards, Mr Graham Cooke), Paddy (Executive Director of K Wah International Holding Limited, Ms Paddy Lui), Mr Wassermann (General Manager of InterContinental Grand Stanford Hong Kong, Mr Alexander Wassermann), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It is my great pleasure to join you all tonight on this very special occasion celebrating the World Travel Awards' Silver Jubilee Anniversary. I am particularly pleased that Hong Kong is once again chosen to be the host of this prestigious event this year.

Over the past years, the Awards has gained a notable reputation for providing a benchmark for excellence across different sectors of the tourism industry. Indeed, Hong Kong shares the same values with the Awards in driving for excellence in the provision of the warmest hospitality and highest level of service to our visitors. With the concerted efforts of our industry members, Hong Kong has become one of the world's favourite tourist destinations. We are proud that our city is ranked by the Euromonitor International as number one among the top 100 city destinations in the world.

While a lot of people would use tourist numbers as an easy indicator of the popularity of a city's tourism attractions, I must reiterate that Hong Kong's success has not and should not be measured by tourist figures alone. I would say, total experience among tourists counts better. Even if we look at figures, let us look at a bucket of them. If we look at retail figures (total retail sales value increased by 7.8 per cent year on year in July 2018), hotel occupancy (rates were nearly 90 per cent in 2017), visits to attractions, MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) activities, diversity of tourists among origins and balance between long and short-haul travels, 2017 and 2018 have been quite rewarding years for Hong Kong. But we can do better.

We can do better by broadening and deepening the scope of entertainment, enjoyment and experience of tourists in Hong Kong. This involves constant upgrading and improvement of services, the creation of and reinvesting in new attractions, and re-discovering hidden treasures in our tourism resources. The rejuvenation of history and heritage content together with arts and culture in our Central District is a recent example. The recent completion of the renovated Tai Kwun, the restoration and rebirth of the three historical monument buildings of the Central Police Station, Central Magistracy and Victoria Prison have now become an exciting landmark among our tourist attractions. Together with the Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail and PMQ, which has become home to over 100 design galleries and shops, Central district offers a totally new and dramatic experience to our visitors.

We will continue to do more in enriching what a tourist, new or repeat, in getting a totally new experience in discovering Hong Kong. Following the success of Central Old Town, our next project is to "experience every local bit" of two other districts namely Sham Shui Po and Wan Chai Districts where typical Hong Kong style of local living and livelihood could be of interest to tourists too. I am sure these are interesting and rewarding experiences for getting to know more about the local character of Hong Kong as a city where the East meets the West; and tradition crosses over with modern metropolitan life.

Creating new attractions alone cannot satisfy a sustainable tourism trade. City management, municipal services and quality assurance are all important. Safety, comfort and trust cannot be taken for granted. And any city that is safe and easy to travel in will be greatly welcomed by visitors.

In this regard, I am proud to say that Hong Kong is one of the safest cities in the world, and a city that is easy for any tourists to get around with its efficient transport and tourist-friendly facilities. These are important pillars that support our industry. And we must continue to make the best endeavour to do more and do better in receiving visitors from all over the world and to ensure that they have enjoyed their stay.

The tourism industry is not a single or stand-alone trade. Increasingly, tourism works in tandem with related businesses like conferences and MICE, and business travellers' experience in particular, is often important in facilitating their repeated visits and furthering their goal in coming to a city for purposes other than sightseeing.

Hong Kong prides itself as an international business and financial centre, and we will continue to provide the best venue for all these commercial activities and play a good host to events like the one here this evening.

In the coming few weeks, we will see the commissioning of two major cross-boundary modern transport links, connecting Hong Kong much closer, easier and more comfortably to our immediate hinterland, the Bay Area (the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area), as well as the entire country of the Mainland of China. The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao-Bridge and the high speed railway (Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link) will be our new connections to the wider region and the world. It is also high time for Hong Kong to do better in seizing the opportunity to position ourselves as the most favourite destination as well as a prime landing place for multi-destination travelling in this region.

With all these new and exciting things happening, I stand ready to welcome all of you to come to Hong Kong more frequently.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the creator and organiser of the World Travel Awards, and to all those involved in making the Awards a guiding light over the past 25 years. I must also extend my warmest congratulations to this year's award winners, who well deserve our big applause. Well done!

I wish you all a great evening. Thank you.

Ends/Monday, September 3, 2018

Issued at HKT 22:19