

Speech by SCED at Genting Dream Launch Ceremony in Hong Kong (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, at the Genting Dream Launch Ceremony in Hong Kong today (November 12):

Tan Sri Lim (Chairman of Genting Hong Kong, Tan Sri Lim Kok Thay), Colin (Advisor of Genting Hong Kong, Mr Colin Au), Thatcher (President of Dream Cruises, Mr Thatcher Brown), Captain Silvennoinen (Captain of Genting Dream, Captain Jukka Silvennoinen), Peter (Chairman of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Dr Peter Lam), distinguished guests and colleagues in the Government,

It is my great pleasure to join all of you here on this very exciting occasion of welcoming the arrival of Genting Dream - the inaugural cruise vessel of Dream Cruises - at Hong Kong today. This is a truly remarkable moment of the cruise tourism development in Hong Kong and I have been looking forward to the arrival of Genting Dream since the announcement of the launch of Dream Cruises in November last year.

I heard a lot about the good things on Genting Dream. In particular, I hope I will have the chance to experience the submersibles "C-Explorer 5", which can take us down to 200 metres under the sea, and then sit back and watch the first-ever floating version of "China's Got Talent". Unfortunately, I do not have swimming gear today for experiencing the Waterslide Park. In any event, I should thank Tan Sri Lim, Colin and Thatcher for the opportunity to be part of this important event.

Genting Hong Kong and the fleet under its various brands, including Star Cruises, are very familiar to all of us here. For over 20 years, the Hong Kong-based Genting Group has been an important player in the cruise industry, not just in Hong Kong, but all over the world. In fact, cruising on one of the Star Cruises vessels is part of many Hong Kong people's collective memory. And we are most happy to see the leading global leisure, entertainment and hospitality enterprise remains committed to Hong Kong and continues to expand investment and businesses in Hong Kong throughout the years. I thank Genting for your vote of confidence in Hong Kong and we look forward to further fortifying our partnership and collaboration to bring Hong Kong's cruise tourism to new heights.

Indeed, the launch of Dream Cruises means a lot to the development of cruise tourism in Hong Kong. It is the first-ever Hong Kong-based international luxurious cruise brand, providing a great variety of offerings and experiences, as well as the highest-quality services. What is more encouraging and significant is that it will be the first-ever international cruise line with year-round homeporting deployment at the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal.

Earlier this year, the Financial Secretary announced a Budget initiative to promote fly-cruise tourism and additional resources have been given to this effect. We are delighted that Dream Cruises is now one of our partners in cultivating fly-cruise business and we are confident that more cruise lines will be joining this programme.

I like the name Dream Cruises very much. Genting Dream is "where dreams set sail". The name vividly describes how all the dreams could come true when cruising on this modern cruise vessel. When talking about dreams, I must say that Genting Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Government indeed share a common dream and long-term vision in terms of cruise tourism development in Hong Kong. Both of us are very committed to investing in cruise tourism and are optimistic about the future of cruise tourism in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Government together with the Hong Kong Tourism Board spare no efforts in promoting cruise tourism in Hong Kong and promoting the use of our cruise terminals. In 2015, we had 56 ship calls and a total throughput of over 260 000 at Kai Tak Cruise Terminal, which doubled the figures in 2014. This year, we will be having over 90 ship calls and in 2017 we expect to have over 180. We are encouraged by the growth in the use of the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal. And we will, in partnership with the travel trade, continue to work hard to sustain the growth momentum in the coming years.

On closing, I wish Dream Cruises every success in Hong Kong and everybody a memorable journey in this state-of-the-art cruise vessel.

Thank you.

Ends/Saturday, November 12, 2016

Issued at HKT 12:40