

Asian Financial Forum examines opportunities and challenges in new global economic landscape (with photos/video)

The 14th Asian Financial Forum (AFF), jointly organised by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, opened today (January 18) with more than 5 000 influential global policymakers, financial experts, business leaders, economists, investors and entrepreneurs from some 70 countries and regions signed up to participate online for the first time to examine opportunities and challenges for finance, investment and business in the new global economic landscape.

Under the theme "Reshaping World Economic Landscape", the two-day forum this year offers a timely opportunity to foster dialogue and collaboration among participants to build more resilient, sustainable and innovative economies in face of the changing landscape shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, trade disputes, climate change and waves of technological advances.

To open the forum this morning, the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, delivered an opening address and the Secretary of Party Committee of the People's Bank of China and Chairman of the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, Mr Guo Shuqing, gave a keynote speech. The Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, will deliver a speech tomorrow (January 19) morning.

Mrs Lam pointed out in her opening address that Hong Kong's fundamentals remain strong amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Hong Kong's financial system has demonstrated its strengths and resilience. Our financial markets continue to operate orderly, and that includes the Linked Exchange Rate System."

She said that the liquidity in the capital markets of the city is remarkable, with an average daily turnover in December up 49 per cent over the same period in 2019.

With its unique advantages as the international financial centre of China and one of the world's major financial cities, Hong Kong will continue to see enormous opportunities when the pandemic is over, she added.

"We continue to be an ideal gateway between the Mainland and the rest of the world. That very much includes our role as both a conduit for foreign capital investing in the Mainland and the springboard for Mainland companies looking to international markets."

As the HKSAR Government is working to expand the flow of capital and people to create new markets and business opportunities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area), Mrs Lam said she has no doubt that the Wealth Management Connect, which will allow Greater Bay Area residents to carry out cross-boundary investments in wealth management products distributed by banks in the area, will attract a wealth of international financial institutions given the huge potential investor base in the Greater Bay Area.

In his keynote speech, Mr Guo said that Hong Kong has played a pivotal role in every stage of the country's development in the past 40 years. He highlighted that Hong Kong is not only China's Hong Kong, but also Asia's Hong Kong and the world's Hong Kong. Hong Kong will regain its vitality in the new development stage of China and Asia. He added that Hong Kong is vital to the country's new development pattern of dual circulations.

In the morning, the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, chaired the plenary session on "Reshaping World Economic Landscape". Mr Hui shared insights with heavyweight policymakers and international organisation leaders on the role of the financial services sector in contributing to the bolstering of economic recovery and the opportunities for financial services in the new economic landscape. Joining Mr Hui were the Minister of Finance of Luxembourg, Mr Pierre Gramegna; the President and Chairman of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Mr Jin Liqun; the President of the Islamic Development Bank, Dr Bandar M H Hajjar; the President of the New Development Bank, Mr Marcos Troyjo; the Vice-President of the European Investment Bank, Professor Teresa Czerwińska; and the Minister of State at the Department of Finance of Ireland, Mr Sean Fleming.

A policy dialogue session was chaired by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, Mr Eddie Yue. Speakers included the Governor of the Saudi Central Bank, Dr Ahmed Alkholifey; the Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Malaysia, Ms Jessica Chew Cheng Lian; the Commissioner of the Financial Services Agency of Japan, Mr Ryoza Himino; and the Country Director for China and Mongolia, and Director for Korea of The World Bank, Mr Martin Raiser. They exchanged views on the effectiveness of fiscal and monetary policies in supporting growth, and the implications of increasing use of financial technology (fintech) from the regulators' perspective.

Also among the highlights of the first-day programme was the keynote speech delivered by 2018 Nobel Laureate for Economic Sciences, Professor Paul Romer. He analysed the current state of the global economy and posited the path towards a new and sustainable growth engine.

To further promote the development of fintech, the Fintech Showcase, FintechHK Start-up Salon and InnoVenture Salon were set up in a virtual format this year. Together with the online Global Investment Zone, they presented the latest trends in financial innovation, next-generation business and investment opportunities across regions and sectors from more than 140 local and overseas international financial institutions, technology

enterprises, start-ups and investment agencies.

The forum also comprises the Deal Flow Matchmaking Session and Fireside Chat on an online platform for investors and industry players to explore co-operation and exchange ideas in a variety of subjects including the circular economy, blockchain and global venture capital. In addition, a series of Dialogues for Tomorrow made its debut to survey the impact of the pandemic on and the outlook for various sectors such as banking, insurance, fintech and so on.

The forum will continue tomorrow. Two keynote sessions will feature the Co-founder of Reddit and Seven Seven Six, Mr Alexis Ohanian, and the Co-creator of the Apple Voice Assistant, Siri, Dr Luc Julia, as guest speakers to share their insights on innovation, technology and investment. A series of panel discussions and thematic workshops on asset and wealth management, digital financial inclusion, cybersecurity and more will be held throughout the day.

