

Speech by CE at GreenWay 2024 The Dialogue (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at GreenWay 2024 The Dialogue today (April 29):

Honourable Ambassador Thomas Gnocchi (Head of European Union Office to Hong Kong and Macao), Mr Iñaki Amate (Chair of European Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong (EuroCham Hong Kong)), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is a great pleasure to be here for this grand event, the third edition of the GreenWay forum.

If the challenges of climate change are daunting – and they surely are – the co-operation this forum has forged, and continues to create, can only encourage us all. Working together, we can, and we will, make a decided difference.

For bringing us together in such a constructive and co-operative spirit, my thanks to the organisers, the European Union (EU) Office to Hong Kong and Macao, EuroCham Hong Kong, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, as well as Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) of the Hong Kong SAR Government. Grateful, too, for the support by all the supporting organisations and sponsors of this important event.

Last year, as I'm sure you know, was the warmest year since global records began. The high heat continued in the first few months of this year. A comment from the Deputy Director of the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service, Samantha Burgess, put the issue in stark relief earlier this month, saying: "The reality is unless we change our emissions dramatically, we'll look back at 2023 and consider it a cool year, 10 to 20 years in the future."

Hong Kong is acutely aware of our shared responsibility in spearheading a green transformation. And I am pleased to share with you some of the initiatives now in place or in the planning.

First, let me say that Hong Kong was among the earliest cities in Asia to take action against climate change. Our involvement goes back to 1997, when we stopped construction of new, coal-fired power plants.

After reaching a peak in 2014, our carbon emissions have generally been on a downward trend, thanks to the gradual replacement of coal, with natural gas and zero-carbon sources for power generation. In 2022, our per capita emissions were 4.55 tonnes, down from 6.2 tonnes about a decade ago.

China, our country, is committed to peaking its carbon emissions before

2030, and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060. To align with the national commitment, Hong Kong, as a special administrative region, has set an ambitious target to cut carbon emissions by half before 2035 from the 2005 level, and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. We will continue to implement the decarbonisation strategies set out in our Climate Action Plan 2050. They focus on emissions from electricity generation, transport and waste.

On electricity generation, we will cease using coal for daily electricity generation by 2035, less than 10 years from now, to realise our goal of net-zero electricity generation before 2050.

As for transport, last year 64 per cent of our newly registered private cars were electric vehicles. A few months ago, one of Hong Kong's major bus companies gave birth to the first hydrogen bus in its fleet. Later this year, we'll do a trial run of hydrogen street-washing vehicles. By mid-2027, the number of parking spaces with charging facilities will jump to about 200 000.

And to achieve the goal of zero landfill by 2035, we will strengthen our efforts on recycling and expedite the development of modern waste-to-energy incinerators.

Under the unique "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong enjoys strong national support and maintains unparalleled connectivity with the world. Hong Kong has a long history of the rule of law, a simple tax regime and world-class business environment, as well as a multi-talented workforce. These qualities have given rise to our role as a "super connector" and "super value-adder" between the Mainland and the rest of the world. They have also ensured our continuous prominence as an international financial centre.

Hong Kong is determined to capitalise on the prowess in our financial sector today, to address the sustainability needs of tomorrow.

Hong Kong is fast rising as an international green finance centre. Last month, the Hong Kong SAR Government issued a vision statement on developing our sustainability disclosure ecosystem. We are committed to becoming one of the first places to align with the ISSB (International Sustainability Standards Board) Standards, an international standard on sustainability disclosures in financial reporting.

At last count, our green bond issuance accounted for one-third of the market share in Asia. Two months ago, we issued tokenised green bonds worth a total of HK\$6 billion. In addition to the Hong Kong Dollar, the issuance was also denominated in Renminbi, US Dollar and Euro, making it the world's first-ever multi-currency tokenised bond issuance, as well as a shining example in propelling sustainable finance in the era of Web3.

That brings me to our development as an international innovation and technology centre. Innovative technology plays a pivotal role in achieving carbon neutrality. The Hong Kong SAR Government has allocated HK\$400 million to the Green Tech Fund, to support R&D (research and development) projects that help Hong Kong decarbonise.

The Fund has been well received. To date, it has supported 30 projects – from local universities, public research institutes and private enterprises.

They range from green hydrogen production and construction materials, to noise-absorbing meta-materials using recycled plastic. In the next stage, we'll promote their practical application and commercialisation.

Environmental issues know no borders. And we're exploring prospects for tackling pollution and maintaining biodiversity with other cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Hong Kong and Guangdong have been collaborating on regional air quality improvement for years. A regional air quality monitoring network was established in 2005.

From 2006 to 2023, the ambient levels of major regional pollutants decreased by up to 86 per cent, while ozone levels are still on a rising trend. That only underscores the need to strengthen our regional collaboration in this area.

To that end, early this year we concluded a three-year study on regional ozone in collaboration with Guangdong and Macao.

Our three cities are introducing the monitoring of volatile organic compounds, the main precursors of ozone formation, at regional monitoring networks to enhance our understanding of ozone formation within the region.

We also attach great importance to biodiversity, to conserving our bountiful nature. Country parks and special conservation areas make up some 40 per cent of Hong Kong's land area.

Last month, we celebrated the establishment of our 25th country park, Robin's Nest Country Park. It covers an area of 530 breathtaking hectares, home to more than 500 identified plant and animal species.

Robin's Nest will establish a cross-boundary ecological corridor with Shenzhen's adjoining Wutong Mountain Scenic Area. It will create good synergy within the Greater Bay Area in ecological conservation.

And we plan to establish a Wetland Conservation Parks System in phases, and ensure the preservation of the integrity of the wetland ecosystem in our developments.

Alongside our regional collaborations, we value the international partnerships we've established. That certainly includes our friends from the EU.

Our Airport Authority is working on an action plan to drive the use of sustainable aviation fuel in Hong Kong.

Good for the environment, good for business. Our objective is to boost the competitiveness of Hong Kong International Airport, attracting more flights between Hong Kong and the rest of the world. In this regard, we look forward to exchanges with the EU.

EU companies play an important role in our waste management, often collaborating with local counterparts.

And EU enterprises have been working closely with the Government to develop state-of-the-art waste-management facilities that can reduce the bulk of our waste.

Examples include a joint venture formed to develop and operate WEEE·PARK. It was our first large-scale, "waste electrical and electronic equipment", treatment and recycling facility, and got going in 2018. O·PARK1, a similar joint project, operates our first large-scale, organic resources recovery centre. Also commissioned in 2018, it turns food waste into a renewable source for electricity generation and organic compost.

Over the past year or so, let me add, the European Union Office organised six EU-Hong Kong environmental policy discussions with InvestHK. The sessions covered everything from waste and carbon trading, to green transport and mobility.

As I mentioned at the outset, together we can – and will – make a difference in creating a green, sustainable and flourishing future.

My thanks, once again, to our organisers, to all of you who have made the GreenWay forum a driving force in the greening of Hong Kong.

I know you will enjoy today's forum – the speakers, the discussions and the far-reaching possibilities they offer – and I wish you all the best of green business in the year to come.

Thank you very much.



Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on April 26 to noon today (April 29), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 381 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category, in the past three days (including last Saturday and Sunday). No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan" (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 150 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website (www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 46 606 samples of food imported from Japan (including 30 476 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 12 334 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

[“City Companion” Community Alliance on Promoting Mental Health launched \(with photos\)](#)

The Auxiliary Medical Service (AMS) co-operated with the Hong Kong Metropolitan University (HKMU), the Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service, the Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service, the SideBySide, and the Mental Health Association of Hong Kong to form the "City Companion" Community Alliance on Promoting Mental Health today (April 29), working together to draw public attention to the importance of mental health through training instructors and supporting mental-health services.

As the demand for mental-health services increases in society, the AMS will, through collaborating with members of the Alliance, train up some of its adult members and volunteer members as "Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) instructors" equipped with the skills to identify early signs of mental illnesses. The AMS members, after becoming instructors, will then be responsible for providing training for other members and assisting in organising mental-health promotional activities to raise students' and public awareness of the importance of mental health.

The Launch Ceremony of the Alliance was held at the HKMU Jockey Club Institute of Healthcare this morning and the Chief Staff Officer of the AMS, Mr Wong Ying-keung, attended. In the initial stage, the Alliance will focus on the community in Kowloon City District.

In addition, targeting mental health of young people, some AMS cadets will attend a tailor-made mental-health training programme to learn more about the importance of mental health and maintain positive thinking. Upon completion of the training, cadets will become "LMK (Let Me Know) buddies" in the team who will listen to their emotionally distressed peers and accompany them to seek support. The programme is expected to be launched in July.



Judicial appointment

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary today (April 29) announced the appointment of Ms Grace Chow Chiu-man as a District Judge. The appointment will take effect on April 30, 2024.

The appointment is made by the Chief Executive on the recommendation of the Judicial Officers Recommendation Commission.

Further judicial appointments will be announced in due course.

The biographical note of Ms Chow is as follows:

Ms Chow was born in Hong Kong in 1978. She obtained an LL.B. and a P.C.LL. from the University of Hong Kong in 1999 and 2000 respectively. She obtained an LL.M. from the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom in 2001. She was called to the Bar in Hong Kong in 2000. She has been in private practice since 2002. She was appointed as Temporary Deputy Registrar, High Court and Deputy District Judge for periods in 2023 and 2024.

Subsidy arrangement of New Energy

Transport Fund revised

â€‹The technological development of electric vehicles is rapid. To focus the New Energy Transport Fund (the Fund) on subsidising trials on new energy technologies that are more suited or better placed in meeting the needs of the transport sector, thereby expediting their green transformation, the Environment and Ecology Bureau has timely reviewed the subsidy framework, approach and levels under "Applications for Trial" of the Fund. The Steering Committee of the Fund has supported the use of a revised subsidy arrangement with the adoption of a merit-based approach in assessing all applications that are being processed.

The revised subsidy arrangement shall enable the Government to make the best use of the Fund for promoting the green transformation of the transport sector. For details of the revision, please visit the website of the Fund (www.eeb.gov.hk/en/new-energy-transport-fund.html) or call the enquiry hotline on 2824 0022.

The Government has put in place the Fund since March 2011 to subsidise the testing and encourage wider use of green innovative transport technologies for a variety of commercial transport tools including goods vehicles (including special purpose vehicles), taxis, light buses, buses, vessels, motorcycles, non-road vehicles, or the aforesaid transport tools of charitable/non-profit making organisations providing services to their clients. The technologies to be subsidised include new energy vehicles or vessels, conversion of in-use conventional vehicles or vessels to new energy vehicles or vessels, and after-treatment emission reduction devices or fuel saving devices applicable to vehicles or vessels. Transport operators and charitable/non-profit making organisations may apply for trying out different green technology products subject to a maximum subsidy of \$10 million for each application and a total subsidy of \$12 million for each applicant. The Fund completed its review in September 2020 to expand the subsidy scope and refine the subsidy level and ceiling.

As of March 2024, the Fund has approved 319 trials involving a total subsidy of \$272 million. A total of 180 approved trials under the Fund have been completed. Trial reports have been uploaded to the Fund's website.