

Keynote speech by SITI at business luncheon hosted by Dubai ETO and co-organised by HKTDC (English only)

Following is the keynote speech by the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, at the business luncheon hosted by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Dubai (Dubai ETO) and co-organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on March 6 (Dubai time):

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon and greeting from Hong Kong! It gives me great pleasure to meet you all today, on such a beautiful sunny day in Dubai. With me today are representatives from Hong Kong's two major I&T (innovation and technology) flagships, namely Hong Kong Science Park and Hong Kong Cyberport as well as their tech ventures. Our gathering here today best exemplifies the spirit of innovation and collaboration that transcends borders and propels our economies forward.

We all know in the past several decades, the UAE has transformed into a famous trade and tourism hub, and also a rising star in technology and innovation.

In fact, Hong Kong and the UAE have a lot in common. For example, we both have diverse cultures, where West meets East, tradition meets modernity. We both share the same vision of developing a diversified and sustainable economy, and most importantly, of becoming a leading I&T hub in our respective regions.

Today I am happy to have this opportunity to update you about Hong Kong's flourishing development in innovation and technology and how we are playing the role as a "super value-adder" to bridge Mainland China and the rest of the world, particularly the UAE and the Middle East, for fostering global I&T collaboration and development.

Soon after the current-term Government took office, we published the Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Development Blueprint in December 2022, which sets out key development directions and strategies for Hong Kong in moving in full steam towards the international innovation and technology centre.

This vision is underpinned by the unwavering support from our motherland, our strategic role in the Belt and Road Initiative, the opportunities brought by our national development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, GBA in short, and more importantly, our unique advantages Hong Kong can enjoy under the principle of "one country, two systems".

With global economic gravity shifting gradually from West to East, economies in Asia, especially the Mainland China, are playing a pivotal role in driving global I&T growth and hereby bringing enormous opportunities.

Strategically located in the centre of Asia on Mainland China's doorstep, Hong Kong is a key node city of the Belt and Road and has the best gateway to the Mainland China or even Asia market. With the easy accessibility supported by our world-class infrastructure, it only takes a few hours from Hong Kong to most of the major Asian cities and only one hour to commute Hong Kong and all major cities in the Greater Bay area, including Shenzhen and Guangzhou.

We are a well-known international financial and trade centre, thanks to our free trade policy, robust legal system, simple tax regime, diversified financing channels and comprehensive professional services. All these factors have contributed to Hong Kong's success and international reputation, providing fertile ground for Hong Kong to grow into one of the most vibrant innovation hubs in the region.

Our I&T Development Blueprint as I've just mentioned, has clearly identified life and health tech, AI and data science, as well as new energy and advanced manufacturing industries as our strategic tech industries. In the past few years, we have adopted a multi-pronged approach to attract talent and enterprises of relevant sectors from around the globe to set foot in Hong Kong. Now please allow me to highlight some of the key initiatives that we have introduced to boost the development of these industries.

With solid research capabilities, Hong Kong is home to five top 100 universities, top notch medical schools and research laboratories, as well as many world class experts and scholars. To capitalise on our strength, we have earmarked six billion Hong Kong dollars, approximately 770 million US dollars, to subsidise local universities in collaborating with Mainland China and overseas organisations to set up life and health research and development institutes.

We are also establishing an AI supercomputing centre in Hong Kong Cyberport to support the unprecedented demand on computing power for AI development. The first phase of this strategic digital infrastructure is expected to start operating within this year at the earliest. We will allocate another three billion Hong Kong dollars, which is about 390 million US dollars, to launch a three-year funding scheme specifically for AI to support the development of the AI ecosystem in Hong Kong.

The whole is greater than the sum of its part. This is a perfect description of the powerful synergy created by the GBA market. You may wish to know that the Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Guangzhou science and technology cluster has been ranked the second among the world's top 100 clusters for the fourth consecutive year based on the Global Innovation Index 2023.

Through solidifying bilateral I&T co-operation and partnership, Hong Kong can serve as a springboard for the start-up and enterprises of the UAE

to enter the GBA, Mainland China and Asian markets. On the other hand, Hong Kong tech companies can also make full use of the UAE as a gateway to expand their business and tap into the prosperous Middle East market. There are so many opportunities and possibilities for the collaboration between Hong Kong and the UAE in a wide range of tech areas, including AI, Healthtech, Greentech, Fintech, smart city and so on.

It is often said that technology is a double-edged sword. This makes global I&T collaboration particularly important, not only to seize the opportunities it brings, but also to address the challenges it poses. We stand ready to promote Hong Kong's unique role as a "super value-adder", and to make good use of our distinctive advantage of being "backed by the motherland, and connected to the world", to create value in enhancing mutually beneficial partnership with friends in the international community.

Before I close, I would like to express my gratitude to the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Dubai and the Hong Kong Trade and Development Council for jointly organising this luncheon today. I am confident that the I&T exchanges between Hong Kong and the UAE will expand and continue beyond today's luncheon. I would like to invite all of you to come to Hong Kong to experience the vivid I&T atmosphere of the city and explore boundless business opportunities. From here, let us sow the seeds of I&T collaboration to cultivate a more vibrant global I&T ecosystem for a brighter future.

Thank you again for joining us today. May I wish you fruitful exchanges in the following time, and may the I&T partnership between Hong Kong and the UAE flourish like the desert blooms after the rain. Thank you very much.