

LCQ13: Attracting visitors to Hong Kong

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yung and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, in the Legislative Council today (January 15):

Question:

Since December 1 last year, the Central Government has resumed the multiple-entry Individual Visit Endorsements for Shenzhen permanent residents to visit Hong Kong and implemented a new arrangement to expand such endorsements to Shenzhen residence permit holders. On the other hand, according to the data of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, the number of non-Mainland visitor arrivals to Hong Kong increased between January and October 2024. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the total number of visitor arrivals to Hong Kong in 2024 and whether this number met the Government's expectations; the rate of increase in the number of Mainland visitor arrivals following the resumption and expansion of the multiple-entry endorsements arrangement for Shenzhen residents; the estimated number of visitor arrivals to Hong Kong in 2025; whether the Government has plans to seek further tourism measures benefiting Hong Kong from the Central Government;

(2) how the Government will implement the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry 2.0 and utilise the Central Government's various tourism measures benefiting Hong Kong to promote Hong Kong's tourism development and deepen its appeal as a tourist city, with a view to attracting more visitors from the Mainland and overseas to visit Hong Kong; and

(3) given that Hong Kong integrates both Chinese and Western food cultures and has long been renowned as a "culinary paradise", how the Government promotes Hong Kong's cuisine to attract more visitors; whether the Government has plans to apply to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation for the designation of Hong Kong as a "World City of Gastronomy"; if so, of the progress?

Reply:

President,

The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB) promulgated the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry 2.0 (Blueprint 2.0) on December 30, 2024, proposing working directions and measures to be implemented in the coming five years with concentrated efforts and resources. With the advantage of having the unwavering support from our motherland, we

will continue to make the best use of the Central Government's various supporting measures benefitting Hong Kong to promote the all-round development of Hong Kong's tourism industry so as to enhance our competitiveness in the long run, strengthen people-to-people exchanges through promoting tourism, reach new heights on the path to continuous innovation, establish the concept of "tourism is everywhere" in Hong Kong, tell the good stories of China and Hong Kong, and at the same time inject new momentum into the development of ecosystem of Hong Kong's tourism economy.

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Chan Yung, the reply is as follows:

(1) Visitor arrivals in Hong Kong recorded a steady growth in 2024. The whole-year visitor arrivals are close to 45 million, which is in line with the forecast. After the resumption of the multiple-entry Individual Visit Scheme (IVS), the number of Mainland visitor arrivals in December 2024 exceeded 3.1 million, averaging over 100 000 people per day, which is 17 per cent higher than the daily average in November. Regarding the estimated total number of visitor arrivals for 2025, we are currently analysing and making assessment taking into account various factors, including airline capacity, exchange rates, global economic conditions and travel patterns. We will announce the estimated number in due course.

The Government expresses sincere gratitude towards the Central Government's continuous care and support for Hong Kong, valuing and considering Hong Kong Special Administration Region Government's proposals. In the past year, various measures benefitting Hong Kong have been rolled out continuously including the expansion of IVS to increase the applicable cities to 59; the resumption of multiple-entry permits for the residents of Shenzhen to travel to Hong Kong and expansion of the measure to cover holders of residence permits; the launch of direct sleeper trains connecting Hong Kong with Beijing and Shanghai; the increase of duty-free allowance for luggage articles brought into the Mainland from Hong Kong by visitors who are Mainland residents, thereby stimulating Hong Kong's tourism, retail, and catering industries, and creating new impetus for Hong Kong's economy. The Government will make good use of the various measures benefitting Hong Kong to promote the all-round development of Hong Kong's tourism industry and maintain communication with the relevant ministries of the Central Government with a view to enabling more Mainland travellers to visit Hong Kong more flexibly and conveniently.

(2) Blueprint 2.0 sets out in a forward-looking manner the core principles, development strategies and pathways, and the overall working directions for Hong Kong's tourism development in the next five years. Our vision and mission are to consolidate Hong Kong's position as a world-class premier tourist destination. At the same time, we further advocate the healthy and sustainable development of tourism-related industries, and to promote economic development through tourism.

Blueprint 2.0 proposes four-pronged positioning for tourism development: including (i) reinforcing the role of an international tourism hub and a core

demonstration zone for multi-destination tourism; (ii) highlighting the unique elements of Hong Kong's local cultural characteristics that are irreplaceable and unrepeatably and making good use of its positioning as the East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, with a view to achieving "shaping tourism with cultural activities and promoting culture through tourism"; (iii) upholding Hong Kong's positioning as a city with high-quality tourism experiences; and (iv) stressing the importance of quality over quantity in development to build Hong Kong into a demonstration point for sustainable tourism, thereby further polishing the charisma of Hong Kong as an iconic tourist city.

Blueprint 2.0 also proposes four development strategies and 133 measures for further advocating the healthy and sustainable development of Hong Kong's tourism industry. The four development strategies include:

1. Nurture and develop tourism products (to nurture and develop tourism products and initiatives with local and international characteristics) – focuses on pressing ahead in-depth integration of tourism with four areas, namely culture, sports, ecology and mega events, in which Hong Kong possesses world-class resources but have yet been fully presented to global visitors, and crafting a series of distinctive and attractive tourism products and projects to attract global visitors to explore in depth Hong Kong's rich and diversified unique tourism resources, with a view to enhancing Hong Kong's attractiveness as a world-class premier tourism destination;
2. Visitors from all parts of the world gather in Hong Kong (to develop a diversified portfolio of visitor source markets for Hong Kong, with a focus on attracting high value-added overnight visitors) – the strategy has two key dimensions which include developing potential source markets while consolidating the existing core markets, and rolling out promotions targeting the characteristics of specific segments to encourage more meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions and cruise visitors to come to Hong Kong, and expanding the silver-haired, family, study tour and youth source markets for attracting high-value added visitors at the same time;
3. Intelligent and convenient travel to Hong Kong (to promote smart tourism) – including facilitating and enhancing visitors' experience, and improving the competitiveness of the industry. Through the use of modern information technology such as electronic platforms, big data and artificial intelligence, we will further enhance the smart level of tourism services and add smart elements to tourist attractions, so as to provide visitors with a more convenient, efficient and user-friendly travel experience; and
4. Quality services for visitors (to enhance the service quality and support of the tourism industry on all fronts, and to cultivate talents) – Hong Kong has positioned itself as a destination providing high-quality tourism experiences. Quality service is indispensable in welcoming visitors. This strategy aims to attract talents, nurture professionals, enhance service quality and improve hardware support.

The CSTB, as the policy bureau responsible for promoting the development

of culture, sports and tourism, will continue to actively join hands with other bureaux and departments and strengthen co-operation with various sectors so as to jointly promote the prosperous and healthy development of Hong Kong's tourism industry through the implementation of the positioning, development strategies as well as the relevant measures set out in Blueprint 2.0 with a view to attracting more visitors from the Mainland and overseas to Hong Kong.

(3) Hong Kong's culinary scene is a dynamic tapestry of diverse and vibrant flavours with the fusion of traditional Chinese and Western food cultures. Hong Kong has long been recognised by prestigious Mainland and overseas gourmet guides. Hong Kong is home to more than 200 Michelin-starred or Michelin Guide listed restaurants. There are two restaurants being selected as the "Asia's 50 Best Restaurant" and bars from Hong Kong top the "Asia's 50 Best Bars" for the fourth consecutive year. Besides, Dianping, an online lifestyle portal based in the Mainland, hosted its Announcement and Award Ceremony of "Must-Eat List" for Hong Kong, Macao and Overseas Regions in Hong Kong in August 2024. Not only a total of 39 restaurants from Hong Kong were on the list, Hong Kong was also the first city outside the Mainland to host the platform's high-profile award ceremony highlighting culinary excellence, reflecting Hong Kong's gastronomic excellence.

In view of the above, we have been promoting Hong Kong as a "City of Gastronomy" to the global audience through different promotional means and channels. In respect of global promotions, apart from using social media platforms and websites to showcase the diversity and appeal of Hong Kong's cuisines, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) collaborated with global TV channels and online streaming platforms to produce programmes that showcased Hong Kong's culinary delights, such as "Restaurant on the Edge" on Netflix and "Kung Food! Hong Kong's Grandmasters of Cuisine" on Discovery Channel. Last year, the HKTB partnered with the renowned food show – "MasterChef Australia" to feature Hong Kong gourmet in its programme, covering both Hong Kong-styled street food stalls and Michelin-star experiences. Besides, the HKTB invited celebrities around the world to gain first-hand experiences of the city's gastronomic offerings with a view to inspiring more visitors to embark on culinary journeys to Hong Kong through their sharing in social media and influential reach.

In respect of organising and supporting gastronomic events, the HKTB has staged the annual "Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival" since 2009, attracting large numbers of locals and visitors to participate. The festival boasted over hundreds of participating booths, offering a selection of diverse global wines and culinary delights, and creating a joyful atmosphere of culinary exploration to the city. Following the "Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival" was the month-long "Taste Around Town" promotion, which extended the Festival's ambience to the whole city. During this promotion, local restaurants and bars in town offered time-limited discounts, special menus and cocktails with local characteristics to allow locals and visitors to immerse themselves into the city's rich food culture.

With the support of the HKTB, the award ceremony of "Asia's 50 Best

Bars" has been held in Hong Kong for the second consecutive year. The HKTB also sealed a three-year partnership with the "50 Best" organiser and Hong Kong will host more gastronomy-related "50 Best" award ceremonies in the future to further consolidate Hong Kong's status as a global "City of Gastronomy". Besides, the HKTB supported and promoted various culinary and convention & exhibition events, including the world's leading wine and spirits trade show, "Vinexpo Asia", Hong Kong International Tea Fair, Food Expo, Asia Fruit Logistica, Hong Kong International Wine and Spirits Fair and the Asia's leading fine food & drinks, hospitality equipment and supplies tradeshow, "HOFEX", to showcase the vibrant and diverse culinary landscape of Hong Kong and enhance the city's reputation as a global gastronomic destination.

We note that there are currently more than 50 cities designated as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's "City of Gastronomy", including six cities in China, namely Chengdu, Shunde, Macao, Yangzhou, Huaian and Chaozhou, and other cities like Tsuruoka of Japan, Tucson of the US, Jeonju of South Korea, Rouen of France. The Government will study relevant work with reference to the experience of the designated cities.