

# Opening remarks by STH at opening ceremony of Hong Kong Maritime Week 2021 (English only) (with photos)

Following is the opening remarks by the Chairman of the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board and Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, at the opening ceremony of Hong Kong Maritime Week 2021 today (November 1):

Distinguished guests, friends of the maritime community, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I would like to extend my warmest welcome to you all for joining the Hong Kong Maritime Week 2021. We are delighted to see the return of the Hong Kong Maritime Week despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a time when the global supply chain suffers from unprecedented disruption by the pandemic, international trade and logistics resilience provides a lifeline for millions, enabling access to food and other essential supplies. According to the World Trade Organization, merchandise trade declined by 5.3 per cent in volume and 7.6 per cent in value in 2020. However, despite some initial disruptions, the value of trade in medical products rose by 16 per cent, and trade in personal protective equipment expanded by 50 per cent. In the first half of 2021, merchandise trade had rebounded above its pre-pandemic peak, and the World Trade Organization is now predicting a 10.8 per cent growth in volume in 2021, followed by a 4.7 per cent rise in 2022. So we do see the light at the end of the tunnel.

In 2020, Hong Kong ranked sixth among leading world traders, accounting for 3.2 per cent of world merchandise trade, with a total trade value of US\$1.1 trillion. With over 90 per cent of our cargo volume being carried by water, port and shipping play a vital role. With over 150 years of maritime heritage, robust international connectivity and our multi-faceted maritime excellence, the Hong Kong port remains one of the top 10 container ports in the world, as well as a transshipment hub in the region. There are some 280 weekly container vessel sailings, connecting to over 600 destinations worldwide. We are also home to nearly 900 shipping-related companies, providing a broad spectrum of well-developed maritime services. The opening of the first overseas office by the International Chamber of Shipping and the designation of Hong Kong by the Baltic and International Maritime Council as their named arbitration venue all speak for themselves.

Being an international maritime centre, Hong Kong is not immune from global challenges faced by other port cities, particularly the disruptions caused by the pandemic. We put public health first and foremost; we also endeavour to do whatever we can to help ensure a smooth and steady flow of goods across the globe, with our port operating ceaselessly round the clock. Besides, we also facilitate sea crew change, bunkering and re-provisioning in

Hong Kong.

While the pandemic is yet to be over, we must plan ahead for post-COVID and long-term development. For Hong Kong, other than fostering closer collaboration with counterparts in the Greater Bay Area to make the most of the cluster effect, and enhancing our competitiveness and global outreach in maritime services, we are determined to go smart and green too. Adopting the use of innovative technology and promoting digitalisation has topped our agenda. To this end, we have set up a Task Force on Smart Port Development, and call upon industry stakeholders, to critically examine and see to it.

The 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development reaffirms the unwavering support of the Central People's Government to reinforce Hong Kong's position as an international maritime centre. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is committed to integrating into the "dual circulation" and contributing to the national development strategy. All these would provide maritime stakeholders, both local and global, immense opportunities for common prosperity.

2021 marks the fifth edition of the Hong Kong Maritime Week. With concerted efforts, it has become an annual flagship event of Hong Kong's maritime sector. This year, we have over 30 activities, organised by over 40 partners from home and abroad, with a wide variety ranging from seminar, conference and forum to light-hearted activities such as visit, exhibition and family fun day. Such extensive coverage and participation is a clear demonstration of the solidarity and teamwork of our maritime community. Enjoy the programme, and I wish you all a fruitful week. Thank you.

