

SCED briefs BritCham on business outlook and Policy Address initiatives

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, updated members of the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong (BritCham) on Hong Kong's business outlook and initiatives related to commerce and trade in "The Chief Executive's 2021 Policy Address" at an event organised by BritCham today (October 12).

Mr Yau said Hong Kong plays an important role in international trade with its unique and highly internationalised business environment. Last year, Hong Kong's global ranking in terms of total merchandise trade value rose to the sixth place. Benefitting from the stable supply chains maintained through effective control of the epidemic in the Mainland, the value of Hong Kong's total merchandise trade has rebounded since the fourth quarter of last year and hit a record high of \$6,509.9 billion for the first eight months of this year.

Furthermore, according to two latest annual surveys by Invest Hong Kong and the Census and Statistics Department, the number of business operations in Hong Kong with parent companies overseas or in the Mainland reached 9 049 and the number of start-ups in Hong Kong were 3 755 in 2021, both reaching record highs. These figures demonstrate fully that despite the impact of COVID-19 epidemic, Hong Kong's business environment remains favourable, which makes Hong Kong an ideal place for companies to set up or expand their businesses, and for start-ups to flourish.

Mr Yau stressed that Hong Kong would, as always, be a staunch supporter of free trade and would strive to explore more trade opportunities for businesses through participating actively in the affairs of the World Trade Organization and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation; seeking early accession to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership; and setting up more overseas Economic and Trade Offices to enhance Hong Kong's global economic and trade network and connections.

He also highlighted the support measures for small and medium-sized exporters and the convention and exhibition (C&E) industry in the Policy Address. The Hong Kong Export Credit Insurance Corporation will roll out a number of measures to strengthen support for small and medium-sized exporters, including launching the Export Credit Guarantee Scheme on a pilot basis early next year, offering a more flexible indemnity ratio to enhance insurance coverage and expediting credit limit approval, so that the exporters will be in a better position to secure orders and market share.

The C&E industry is crucial to Hong Kong as an international trade centre. To help the industry cope with the challenges brought about by the prolonged epidemic, the validity period of the Convention and Exhibition Industry Subsidy Scheme has been extended for six months to the end of 2022. Funds have also been allocated under the Scheme to provide one-off immediate

relief to eligible private exhibition organisers with a view to enhancing confidence in staging C&E events in Hong Kong and injecting impetus into the trade. In the long run, the Government will expand C&E facilities.

Mr Yau will continue to brief representatives of foreign chambers of commerce on initiatives related to commerce and trade in the Policy Address next week.