

SCED speaks to the media

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, at a media session after attending a luncheon in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China on "Complementary Strengths of Hong Kong in National Development" today (September 12):

Reporter: With regard to the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, and also the Australian free trade deal seems to be derailed by the end of this year as well, how would the Government try to salvage the internationally perceived erosion of freedom and also the rule of law?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: As I said many times, Hong Kong's economic and trading status is provided under the Basic Law Articles 116 and 151, which allow Hong Kong to be represented as an independent and separate member in the World Trade Organization. This is not any gift from any other countries, but a constitutional right granted by our country under "one country, two systems". There is every reason for Hong Kong to safeguard our own autonomy in order to preserve our special status. There is nothing to do with any interventions or interference from other jurisdictions.

Different countries may have their own policies towards Hong Kong – for that, they have to consider their own interests. For instance, countries earning huge surplus in Hong Kong must premise on their policies towards Hong Kong (on that), in addition to Hong Kong's special status. So, in a way, we will try to maintain our own integrity and safeguard the constitutional right that Hong Kong enjoys.

Reporter: We understand that you want to maintain the integrity of Hong Kong's autonomy, but what would you try to do to salvage the international perception of the eroded freedom and rule of law?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I think facts would speak for themselves. Even in handling difficulties now, we are perfectly working within the confines of "one country, two systems", respecting our own rule of law and using every means within the constitutional rights of the SAR Government. We will continue to double our efforts in presenting the factual account to the international community.

The smooth running of many of the international conferences, like what I mentioned, the Belt and Road Summit, which is being held yesterday and today, is also a good testimony that international visitors, be they from government or business sectors, continue to visit Hong Kong and see our role in this important juncture, particularly at a time when there are huge uncertainties in the global trading environment. The strong presence of over 5 000 visitors from all over the globe, from 69 countries, coming here to share their experiences and do business matching among themselves is a good vote of confidence on Hong Kong's status despite the problems that we are

encountering.

Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)