

SFST's speech at Hong Kong Spring Reception in Chicago (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, at the Hong Kong Spring Reception in Chicago, the United States (US) yesterday (April 11, Chicago time):

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, friends of Hong Kong,

It gives me great pleasure to join you tonight at the Hong Kong Spring Reception, co-hosted by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in New York and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council in Chicago.

Spring is the season of renewal. Spirits are high and people are looking forward with keen anticipation to the year ahead. As we welcome the arrival of a new season, Hong Kong is also nurturing fresh vitality and prosperity.

As the events capital of Asia, Hong Kong stands as a compact, globally connected city that is increasingly attracting world-class mega events. In the first half of 2024 alone, more than 80 mega events have been or will be held in Hong Kong, including notable ones such as the Financial Mega Event Week, the ComplexCon Hong Kong, Art Basel Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Rugby Sevens, and many more.

Our economy is gaining momentum as well. The Hong Kong economy rebounded in 2023 with real GDP (gross domestic product) growth resuming at 3.2 per cent. It is projected to further expand in 2024, with growth of 2.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent in real terms for the year as a whole.

Hong Kong's air passenger traffic has recovered to 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. Our various talent admission schemes have attracted over 250 000 applications since the end of 2022, including 70 000 submissions through the Top Talent Pass Scheme.

Banking deposits in Hong Kong exceeded US\$2 trillion at the end of 2023. That's around 17 per cent higher than the pre-Covid level. Hong Kong remains Asia's leading asset and wealth management centre, managing close to US\$4 trillion in assets. We are also Asia's largest hedge fund hub and the second-largest private equity centre.

Hong Kong has established itself as a leader in green and sustainable finance in Asia. In 2022, we captured over one-third of the market share as a green and sustainable bond arranger in the region. To support this burgeoning industry, the Hong Kong Government has implemented the impactful Green and Sustainable Finance Grant Scheme. This programme has already provided subsidies to eligible bond issuers and loan borrowers, facilitating the

issuance of more than 340 green and sustainable debt instruments valued at over US\$100 billion. Recently in March, we released a vision statement to outline how we will assist companies and financial institutions in enhancing their sustainability reporting and data analysis practices. This statement elucidates our strategic priority of promoting green and sustainable finance as a key driver for the future. Hong Kong is firmly committed to cementing our position as a leading centre for sustainable finance in Asia. In fact, this is a key area in which I see many opportunities for co-operation between Hong Kong and the US.

Our long-standing bilateral trade relations with the US remain strong despite geopolitical tensions and economic headwinds. The US is Hong Kong's third-largest trading partner, and Hong Kong is the second-largest trading partner economy with which the US enjoys a trade surplus. At last count, there are close to 1 300 US firms in Hong Kong.

Spring is also a time to sow the seeds for future growth. In his 2024-25 Hong Kong Budget unveiled in February, the Financial Secretary introduced a raft of measures to bolster confidence and create favourable conditions for Hong Kong's economic development.

A series of targeted measures were announced alongside the Budget, which aims at continuing to attract enterprises, capital and talent on all fronts, and support businesses and people's livelihoods.

Ladies and gentlemen, spring is also a season of hope. It is my sincere hope that we can continue our collaborative efforts to strengthen the ties between Hong Kong and the United States.

Last but not least, I'd like to wish you and your families good health, good fortune, and success in the new year. Thank you.

