

Speech by CE at Ministerial Industry Dialogue of Hong Kong Global Maritime Trade Summit (English only) (with video)

Following is the video speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the Ministerial Industry Dialogue of the Hong Kong Global Maritime Trade Summit on November 17 (Lima time):

Mr Emanuele Grimaldi (Chairman of the International Chamber of Shipping), ministers and officials from around the world, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Hong Kong, and to the Hong Kong Global Maritime Trade Summit.

I am currently in Lima, Peru, for this year's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting. Therefore, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you by video.

Today's event opens this year's two-day Hong Kong Global Maritime Trade Summit. In doing so, I'm pleased to note that it also ushers in Hong Kong Maritime Week, the eighth edition, which continues right through Saturday.

This Ministerial Industry Dialogue is a welcome opportunity for policymakers and industry leaders around the world to discuss the critical issues facing global trade and shipping.

And I am delighted to know that so many high-profile officials from our international and local maritime and trade communities have come together today, united by a common purpose.

For that, I am grateful to the International Chamber of Shipping, the ICS, for choosing Hong Kong as host city for this year's Global Maritime Trade Summit.

The ICS, of course, is the principal international trade association for merchant shipowners and operators. It represents more than 80 per cent of the world's merchant fleet.

Previous ICS summits have contributed significantly to global policymaking. The Glasgow Summit, in 2021, led to the adoption, by global shipping, of a net-zero, greenhouse gas emission reduction target for 2050. That was subsequently adopted by governments at the United Nations' International Maritime Organization.

The London Summit, in 2022, led to the adoption of the Clean Energy Marine Hubs initiative by the Clean Energy Ministerial group of global energy ministries. It's now on the agenda of the G20. And the Hong Kong Summit is committed to building consensus on issues critical to maintaining an efficient global maritime transportation system.

The theme of this year's Summit, "Risk and Resilience in an Age of Disruption", certainly captures the moment. Geopolitical dynamics, trade disruptions and climate change are among the many challenges facing the world – and this industry, Hong Kong included.

Hong Kong is, however, well positioned to ride out the storms. Under the unique "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong converges both the China advantage and the global advantage. With our strategic location, state-of-the-art infrastructure and world-class port, we possess unparalleled advantages to excel despite the changing global landscape.

It starts with trade. Last year, our merchandise trade exceeded US\$1.1 trillion, making us the world's 10th largest trading economy.

We are among the world's busiest ports, too, with over 300 container vessel sailings each week to nearly 500 destinations worldwide. Last year, the Hong Kong port handled some 14.4 million TEUs.

We are blessed with a dynamic maritime cluster, counting more than 1 100 shipping and maritime companies. It helps that we have long practised the rule of law under a bilingual common law system, that our tax regime is simple and competitive, and that information, capital, goods and people flow freely, in and out of Hong Kong.

Our maritime services, let me add, are internationally recognised. The latest International Shipping Centre Development Index Report ranked Hong Kong fourth among the world's leading shipping centres.

What truly sets Hong Kong apart is our extensive connections. We act as a "super connector" and "super value-adder", the multi-level bridge between China, our country, and the rest of the world. Last year, the value of goods re-exported through Hong Kong to and from the Mainland amounted to nearly US\$440 billion, or over 83 per cent of Hong Kong's total re-export trade value.

Taking advantage of our singular East-meets-West connectivity, we have ambitious plans for Hong Kong's port and maritime industry.

In my annual Policy Address delivered last month, I unveiled our plans of bringing together Hong Kong's strengths as an international financial, shipping and trading centre. We will create a commodity trading ecosystem in Hong Kong, turning our city into an operation centre for international commodity trading, storage and delivery, shipping and logistics, risk management, and more.

The complexities in geopolitics underscore our city's edge in security and stability. We endeavour to become an investors' destination for gold storage, and build Hong Kong into an international gold trading centre.

We are exploring tax concessions for commodity traders, recognising their significant role in maritime services. We are also encouraging more maritime service companies to set up in Hong Kong through tax concessions. These developments are set to bring immense opportunities to our maritime sector.

There's more. In my Policy Address, I announced that we will set out an action plan on green fuel bunkering in Hong Kong. Our goal is to build a green maritime hub, right here in Hong Kong, taking advantage of related infrastructural development. I am glad to say that we have met our commitment, by promulgating the Action Plan on Green Maritime Fuel Bunkering last week.

We will also press ahead with smart port development, completing the installation of a digitalised port community system next year.

My Policy Address also introduced a reduction in the duty rate for purchasing liquor in Hong Kong. The rate on the purchase amount above HK\$200 – about US\$26 – is being reduced from 100 per cent to 10 per cent. The removal of all duties on wine, in 2008, helped Hong Kong become a regional wine trading and distribution hub, as well as one of the world's top three wine auction centres.

We hope the new liquor initiative will also create new opportunities, spurring the development of such high value-added sectors as logistics, storage, tourism and premium food and beverage consumption.

My thanks, once again, to the ICS for organising the Hong Kong Global Maritime Trade Summit, in collaboration with the Transport and Logistics Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the Hong Kong Shipowners Association.

I know you will enjoy today's Ministerial Industry Dialogue. And I wish you the best of business tomorrow, day two of the Summit, and throughout Hong Kong Maritime Week and its broad range of events, "Navigating to a Greener Future" together, according to the Week's theme.

Make time, too, to discover all that Hong Kong, a world city, has to offer – on land as well as at sea.

Thank you.