

Speech by CS at “Belt and Road Advanced Professional Development Programme in Power and Energy 2020” Online Closing Ceremony (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at "Belt and Road Advanced Professional Development Programme in Power and Energy 2020" Online Closing Ceremony today (September 2):

Distinguished guests, Graduates, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening from Hong Kong, and good morning and good afternoon to you all if you are watching this from other time zones.

It is indeed a great honour for me to officiate at the closing ceremony of the Belt and Road Advanced Professional Development Programme in Power and Energy 2020. This is the third time that I am officiating, and unlike the past two years, this year we are meeting virtually to share the joy of our graduates. Let me first extend my warmest congratulations to all graduates, particularly those from Belt and Road regions.

This Programme is jointly organised by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Xi'an Jiaotong University, State Grid Corporation of China and Hongkong Electric Company. It is exceptionally exemplary in capitalising Hong Kong's unique strengths in fostering professional networking and partnership, truly making Hong Kong a prime professional services platform for the Belt and Road Initiative.

The COVID-19 epidemic indeed is a global challenge of our time calling for collaboration and partnership which are at the heart of the Belt and Road Initiative. Hong Kong remains very determined to reinforce the bonding and fully co-operate with our partners from the Belt and Road regions and beyond.

Innovation and technology has been playing a crucial role in our fight against the virus and in the adaptation of our lifestyle under the "new normal". Needless to say, without the innovation and technology that enabled the holding of a series of webinars through Zoom, it would have been impossible for this Programme to continue its run this year through the Internet.

In this regard, I am truly impressed by the overwhelming response that the Programme has received this year, with a record high of 146 participants from 26 countries and regions despite the global challenges of COVID-19.

Credits must be given to all the partnering organisations for joining hands to make this year's Programme another great success amidst the pandemic.

I learnt that our graduates this year have attended their online professional workshops and technical discussions. You would definitely be amazed with the sophisticated power distribution systems for skyscrapers in metropolitan cities. Our power companies' expertise and operational experience help countries along the Belt and Road Initiative plan and develop their electricity systems.

Energy partnership is a key area for Belt and Road Initiative development and Hong Kong's power sector plays an important role. In Hong Kong, electricity supply has been safe, reliable and affordable. In this connection, Hongkong Electric Company, one of the partners of this Programme, will be proud to tell you that it has been able to maintain a reliability rating of over 99.999 per cent since 1997.

But we do not stop here. We also want our energy to be clean and used efficiently. As the theme of this year's Programme rightly suggests, the world is moving towards a trend of promoting power grids that facilitate green and smart living. Hong Kong is no exception. Let me give you some examples of the measures taken by our Government and community in promoting energy conservation and minimising the environmental impact of power supply.

First, the Government and the power companies in Hong Kong jointly introduced the Feed-in Tariff Scheme in 2018, under which investors can receive payments for the electricity they generate and feed to the grid. The payments are a great incentive to investors as the payback period could be shortened to about 10 years. Indeed, we have seen very encouraging response. By June 2020, the power companies have received over 10 000 applications under the Scheme and approved over 8 600 of them.

Second, as an international business and financial centre, where most commercial activities take place in high-rise buildings, we need a lot of energy to propel our economy forward. To give you a sense of how we compare to the rest of the world, while buildings in 2017 accounted for 36 per cent of global energy consumption and 39 per cent of energy-related carbon emissions, for Hong Kong, the figures were 90 per cent and 60 per cent respectively.

Five years ago, we published our first-ever energy-saving blueprint, and set a target of reducing energy intensity by 40 per cent by 2025, using 2005 as the base. By now, our energy intensity has already decreased by more than 30 per cent, and is the lowest among APEC economies.

Hong Kong has a rich pool of world-class talents, not only in the electricity and engineering industries, but also in a wide range of disciplines, including architecture, risk management, law, consultancy and project management and many more. With professional services of world-class standards and rich experience in city management, Hong Kong is well placed to contribute in terms of professional collaboration and capacity building by

enhancing the professional knowledge and experience of Belt and Road partners in areas such as clean energy and sustainable development. Indeed, Hong Kong enterprises and professionals have been participating in a number of Belt and Road energy projects, both in the traditional electricity generation sector as well as in renewable energy production and smart grid. We are keen to see more of our city's multi-talents joining hands with their Belt and Road counterparts. We are confident that there are ample opportunities of collaboration in the energy services sector and in the wider context of capacity building.

We would like to stress that as a well-connected and externally-oriented economy, Hong Kong remains a dynamic global business and financial centre with a high degree of competitiveness and openness. Hong Kong's uniqueness, stemming from our social and legal systems, our open and efficient market, our free flow of capital, information and talent, as well as our simple, low and territorial-based tax regime, makes us one of the best places in the world to do business and a connecting channel between the Mainland of China and the rest of the world.

Before I close, I would like to share with you the great vision of President Xi Jinping in the written message he sent to the High-level Video Conference on Belt and Road International Co-operation held in June, – I quote – "Be it in taming the virus or in achieving economic recovery, humanity cannot succeed without solidarity, co-operation, and multilateralism. The right approach to tackling global crises and realising long-term development is through greater connectivity, openness and inclusiveness. This is where Belt and Road international co-operation can make a big difference".

Last but not least, I would like to extend again my warmest congratulations to the graduates today. I am sure that the Programme will continue to be a platform for nurturing our professionals in power and energy and building the partnership and mutual support among the Belt and Road countries and regions in the years ahead.

Stay safe, and stay healthy, be fit. Thank you.

