

Speech by CS at Uzbekistan Investment, Trade and Tourism Forum (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, at the Uzbekistan Investment, Trade and Tourism Forum today (April 9):

Ambassador Arziev (Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the People's Republic of China, Mr Farhod Arziev), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to join you all for today's forum, which seeks to promote exchanges and co-operation between Hong Kong and Uzbekistan in investment, trade and tourism.

Located at the heart of Central Asia, Uzbekistan enjoys a long history as a hub for trade, culture and innovation along the historic Silk Road trade route. Today, it plays an important role in fostering economic development and connectivity between Asia and Europe under the Belt and Road Initiative, a key development strategy implemented by our motherland.

Hong Kong treasures the vast opportunities brought about by the Belt and Road Initiative and drives the advancement of this blueprint in various areas.

And trade is one of those areas, I am pleased to say. As an international trade centre, Hong Kong promotes free trade, maintains a robust trading and investment system, and facilitates the free flow of capital, talent, goods and information.

All those advantages have enabled our city to continuously enlarge our global economic and trade networks and expand our reach to Belt and Road markets, including Uzbekistan.

For one thing, our two economies enjoy close trade ties. In 2022, Uzbekistan was Hong Kong's largest trading partner in Central Asia, accounting for some 67 per cent of our total trade with the region.

Strengthening regional co-operation is always close to our heart. In January this year, our Government's Deputy Secretary for Justice led a Hong Kong delegation to join the forum on China-Uzbekistan co-operation in Xinjiang.

Hong Kong will continue to proactively develop a more stable, open, inclusive and mutually beneficial international economic and trade environment. Our city will also continue to serve as the prime gateway

between Mainland China and the rest of the world, thanks to our "one country, two systems" framework – and the distinctive advantages that brings us.

Those advantages include a robust legal and regulatory framework, and a market-oriented and internationalised business environment. They also include our motherland's support for Hong Kong's development of eight strategic centres, covering areas like trade, finance, innovation and technology (I&T), and art and culture.

We encourage enterprises from Central Asia to make good use of Hong Kong's world-class financing, professional services, I&T solutions, and much more, for business development.

Business aside, we are equally determined to strengthen Hong Kong's positioning as a premier tourism destination. We welcome travellers from Uzbekistan to come experience our unique East-meets-West tourism offerings.

We also encourage Hong Kong people to develop tourism and cultural ties with Uzbekistan. I am especially pleased to note that, since 2020, Hong Kong SAR passport holders can visit your country visa-free.

Ladies and gentlemen, I look forward to the closer co-operation between our two economies. Today's inaugural ceremony of the Uzbekistan Economic, Trade, Investment and Cultural Centre in Hong Kong will surely foster our ties.

On that note, I wish you all the best of business, and health, in the year to come. Thank you.

