

# Speech by FS at Aviation Day 2023 (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Aviation Day 2023 today (August 2):

Jack (Chairman of the Airport Authority Hong Kong, Mr Jack So), Mr Walsh (Director General of the International Air Transport Association, Mr Willie Walsh), 王翔東 (Chief Pilot of the Civil Aviation Administration of China, Mr Wan Xiangdong), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I am most delighted to welcome you all today to the Aviation Day at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA). And I say this not just out of courtesy: with the pandemic still raging last year and planes across the region grounded, it is indeed amazing that in a quick turnaround, you all managed to fly into Hong Kong seamlessly from all corners of the world today again like we used to.

And this highlights the resilience of the aviation market of Hong Kong and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) in general. With a population of 86 million and a combined GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of over US\$1.9 trillion, the GBA is a huge market with immense economic vitality and potential. At the heart of it is Hong Kong, which by virtue of its strategic geographical location, international openness and proximity to the Mainland, has over the years developed into an international aviation hub, a status confirmed by the Central Government in the 14th Five-Year Plan and the Outline Development Plan for the GBA development. Indeed, HKIA is by far the premier aviation hub in the GBA, with a substantial share of passengers and air cargo going into and out of the region.

As many of you know, our airport has just celebrated its 25th birthday, and in those 25 glorious years, we saw a substantial rise in destinations served from 120 in 1998 to 220 before the pandemic. A rise also in passenger throughput from 28 million to over 71 million over the same period, and cargo throughput from 1.6 million tonnes in 1998 to 4.2 million tonnes in 2022, making us one of a few major airports being a leader in both passenger and cargo traffic. Even during the pandemic, our airport was still served by about 120 airlines, and remained undoubtedly the busiest cargo airport in the world.

The end of the pandemic has breathed life back to the aviation sector and the GBA is rapidly catching up, and full recovery is now in sight, as alluded to by Jack earlier. Our hands are also on all pumps in restoring and enhancing our international connectivity, including negotiating new Air Services Agreements and expanding existing ones with our civil aviation partners in the Asia-Pacific and further afield, so as to power up the GBA's economic recovery and reconnection with the world.

The future is bright for Hong Kong as an aviation hub, and this is manifested not just in the sunny economic outlook of the GBA, but also a flurry of our far-sighted infrastructural developments, which will enhance our capacity to better serve the GBA and the myriad of countries and territories that our aviation tentacles reach.

This of course includes the Three-Runway System as mentioned by Jack. Another key piece of infrastructure is the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge which starts from the artificial island next to the airport to connect Macao, Zhuhai and the west of the Pearl River Delta. Indeed, Hong Kong is expanding the intermodal connectivity between our airport and the neighbouring cities by road and by sea. It will soon be a reality for Mainland and Macao passengers to travel by land to HKIA for flight connection without the need to go through Hong Kong's immigration procedures.

But let's not forget our excellent land connectivity enabled by high speed rail and road network connecting to east of the Pearl River Delta, including Shenzhen, Guangzhou and beyond. On high speed railway, it takes only 14 minutes from West Kowloon – at the heart of our city centre – to Shenzhen, and about 47 minutes to Guangzhou. That is where we are talking about the one-hour living circle of the GBA, and why prospects of our aviation hub would all the more be better.

The Government, together with the Airport Authority, are transforming our airport into an Airport City, under which HKIA will be developed into a node of various economic activities. The Airport City will blend our airport's core functions with cross-boundary commercial, entertainment, tourism and MICE business, making our airport a new engine propelling the growth of Hong Kong and the GBA. We are also exploring with Zhuhai authorities the feasibility of building an industrial park there, so as to promote the development of the comprehensive aviation industry through synergised cross-boundary co-operation.

We are also keen on making the Hong Kong airport smarter. Flying out of our airport without presenting your passport at any checkpoints is amazing, but it is just a start. Everything from passengers and baggage ferried around the airport by autonomous vehicles, to cargo processed in a more efficient, effective and transparent manner on a blockchain-based platform, to smoother airport processes and resource deployment enabled by data analytics and 5G technologies are all becoming reality.

And our work does not simply stop at the Airport. We are striving to establish Hong Kong as an aircraft leasing and services hub by providing tax deduction so as to attract more aircraft leasing companies to come to Hong Kong. The relevant legislative amendments will be introduced within this year.

Above all, people will be the key to the continued success and sustainable development of the aviation industry. That is why I have, in this year's Budget, injected HK\$200 million to the Maritime and Aviation Training

Fund with a view to supporting manpower training of the logistics industry, and increasing the training places for our Youth Aviation Industry Internship Programme for the Greater Bay Area. Of course, we also warmly welcome talents from abroad who have the expertise and experience in the aviation industry to come to Hong Kong to join us.

Ladies and gentlemen, all these momentous developments make the Aviation Day more relevant than ever. There is much to look forward to from the speeches and panel discussions today. You will learn first-hand from government officials, airport operators and industry experts how the aviation scene in Hong Kong and the GBA at large has evolved and what new opportunities lie ahead. I trust that you will find this forum insightful, and the future development of our international aviation hub exciting.

Before I close, for those who are joining us from abroad, while you are in Hong Kong, allow me to make a strong appeal – please do take some time to visit and enjoy this wonderful city. If you like wine and dine, we don't have import duties on wine, and there are over 200 Michelin-recommended restaurants. Our street food is also of excellent quality. Our scenic country parks are stunning. You may also visit our M+ contemporary arts museum, and the Hong Kong Palace Museum, and immerse yourself in this rich cultural experience.

Finally, I would like to thank the Airport Authority Hong Kong and the International Air Transport Association for organising this event and for the tremendous contribution to Hong Kong's aviation development. I wish you all a fruitful day, and the best in health and business.

