

Speech by FS at Aviation Silk Road International Conference (English only)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Aviation Silk Road International Conference today (April 2):

C Y (Chairman of the Belt and Road Hong Kong Centre, Mr C Y Leung), Mr Chen Yuan (Chairman of the Silk Road Planning Research Centre), Mr Xie (President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Mr Xie Fuzhan), Ms Gittens (Director General of Airports Council International, Ms Angela Gittens), distinguished speakers and panellists, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It's a pleasure to be here today for the fourth Aviation Silk Road International Conference – the first held here in Hong Kong.

Today's gathering, I'm pleased to note, takes place alongside the World Annual General Assembly, Conference and Exhibition of Airports Council International, which is also a first for Hong Kong.

When it comes to aviation, Hong Kong has long attracted attention. The attraction begins with our strategic location in the heart of Asia and within a five-hour flying time of half the world's population.

No less important, we are the premier international gateway to the Mainland of China. Today, more than 100 airlines operate about 1 100 flights between Hong Kong International Airport and some 220 destinations around the world, including 50 in the Mainland.

We're working to build on that impressive track record, further liberalising our air services system to expand Hong Kong's aviation network.

To date, we have signed air services agreements with 67 aviation partners. We have also signed air services agreements and international air transit arrangements with 49 economies along the Belt and Road.

For the past nine years, Hong Kong International Airport has been the world's busiest cargo airport. And we have been continually advancing our cargo handling capabilities and facilities, plus lowering the cost of importing and exporting goods, particularly high-value goods, to and from Hong Kong, with a view to moving our trading and logistics industry up the value chain.

In fact, our airport has been named a Center of Excellence by the International Air Transport Association, in recognition of its prowess in handling both pharmaceuticals and perishable products by air. Indeed, it was just last month that the Association recognised the Hong Kong International

Airport as a Center of Excellence for Perishable Logistics, making us the first airport in the world to receive such certification.

To meet future air traffic growth and maintain Hong Kong's competitiveness as an international aviation hub, the Airport Authority is expanding our airport into a three-runway system.

The Airport Authority is also studying the topside development of the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities Island of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, which, together with other developments on the Airport Island, will turn Lantau into an "Aerotropolis" connecting to the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the world.

Hong Kong's strengths in several critical areas, including financial services and aviation, were reaffirmed in the Greater Bay Area's Outline Development Plan. It also underlines Hong Kong's leading role in the development of high value-added aviation businesses such as aircraft leasing and financing.

To maximise our opportunities in this area, the Government provides attractive tax incentives for aircraft leasing businesses.

A flourishing aviation industry demands sustainable supply of talent. Which is why, in 2016, we set up the Hong Kong International Aviation Academy.

To date, the Academy has offered programmes ranging from entry-level to postgraduate level for more than 12 000 people.

Finally, I wish to thank the Longhao Group and the Belt and Road Hong Kong Centre for organising today's conference, and to all the other organisations that lent their expertise and support to this conference. By connecting people, airlines and economies, together we will excel.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you a rewarding Forum and an enjoyable stay in Hong Kong, Asia's aviation hub.

Thank you.