

Speech by FS at Cathay Pacific Dublin inaugural flight gala cocktail reception (English only)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at Cathay Pacific Dublin inaugural flight gala cocktail reception in Dublin, Ireland today (May 31, Dublin time):

Minister D'Arcy (Minister of State, Department of Finance, Ireland, Mr Michael William D'Arcy), Consul General Ryan (Consul General of Ireland to Hong Kong & Macau, Mr Peter Ryan), Rupert (Chief Executive Officer of Cathay Pacific, Mr Rupert Hogg), distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening.

I'm delighted to be here tonight, in this enchanting historic castle and in Dublin, a charming and witty city of timeless music, literature, and of course, the legendary Irish pubs.

And this characterful capital of Ireland is now going to be much closer to Hong Kong thanks to the launch of Cathay Pacific Airways' direct service between Hong Kong and Dublin. I am confident that this seamless connection by one of the best airlines in the world will strengthen trade and tourism between us and foster closer ties on all fronts – which is also the primary aim of my visit to Dublin.

It helps that Hong Kong and Dublin have much in common.

Dublin Airport, where I landed this morning, is a major gateway to North America. As for Hong Kong, we are the gateway to Mainland China and Southeast Asia, a critical transit hub for business and leisure travellers moving in and out of China, the rest of Asia and around the world.

Half the world's population can be reached from Hong Kong within five hours' flight time. More than 100 airlines offer 1,100 flights every day, connecting Hong Kong with over 220 destinations, including about 50 cities in Mainland China.

With our extensive global connections and well-developed intermodal transport infrastructure, our airport is the world's busiest cargo hub for the eighth consecutive year and the third-busiest international passenger airport.

Looking ahead, as Dublin Airport builds its North Runway, we are also adding a new one to ours. On completion of the three-runway system, the Hong Kong International Airport can handle about 100 million passengers and nine million tonnes of cargo a year.

Aviation aside, both Hong Kong and Dublin are thriving financial

capitals and much potential is awaiting us.

Ladies and gentlemen, with the enhanced connectivity between Dublin and Hong Kong, I welcome Irish companies, big and small, start-ups and well-established ones, to join us, to take advantage of the opportunities Hong Kong can help realise, in the Mainland and throughout the Asian region.

Thanks to the direct flights between Hong Kong and Dublin, those opportunities are now much closer to being realised.

I wish Cathay Pacific Airways every success with its new service to Dublin, the Emerald Isle's charismatic capital.

Thank you and I wish you a very pleasant evening.