

Speech by FS at HOFEX 2019 opening ceremony (English only)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the opening ceremony of HOFEX 2019 – the 18th International Exhibition of Food & Drink, Hotel, Restaurant & Foodservice Equipment, Supplies & Services today (May 7):

Mr Duck (Executive Vice President of UBM Asia, Mr Michael Duck), Anthony (Executive Director of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Mr Anthony Lau), Rebecca (Chairman of the Hong Kong Hotels Association, Ms Rebecca Kwan), Mr Degen (Executive Director of Messe Düsseldorf – Germany, Mr Michael Degen), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is a pleasure to be here with you, for the grand opening of HOFEX 2019.

This is the 32nd year since the debut of HOFEX. And this fair's ever-expanding scale in exhibitors, exhibition space and halls, as well as countries participating, amply demonstrates the growing popularity and international recognition that HOFEX has realised over the years.

This year, we welcome a wide variety of new exhibitors to the fair from Belgium, British Columbia, Czech, Latvia and Spain. In all, more than 2 800 exhibitors from 74 countries and regions will showcase their fine wine, fine food and hospitality products to some 42 000 buyers from 86 countries and regions.

This 18th edition of HOFEX sets another major milestone: it's the biggest in the fair's history.

Event highlights include the Hong Kong International Culinary Classic, featuring 900 international chefs competing in a sweet, and savoury, range of categories. In the team events, there's butchery skills, high-tea and the gourmet team challenges. Individual chefs compete for the right to call themselves kings of the kitchen in Chinese and Western cuisine, as well as gelato and pastry making.

HOFEX is scaling fresh heights in the range of its offerings as well. This year's fair once again features ProWine Asia, in cooperation with Messe Düsseldorf. Launched at the 2017 HOFEX with some 200 exhibitors, ProWine this time around counts more than 300 international wine and spirits exhibitors from 27 countries and regions. This reflects Hong Kong's prominent position as both an international exhibition centre and Asia's wine hub.

In fact, back in 2017, we have imported over 16 million bottles of wine into Hong Kong, although we only managed to consume half of it. The people of

Hong Kong, after all, are known worldwide for their passionate pursuit of good life, wining and dining. That's abundantly evident in the extraordinary number of restaurants here, covering the full menu of local, regional and global cuisines at every delectable level, from street food to Michelin-starred.

Our sophisticated infrastructure, world-class exhibition facilities, high English proficiency and liberal trade policies toward food products are equally compelling reasons for the heady success of HOFEX. In the end, of course, Hong Kong creates the connections that help everyone excel.

I wish you all, buyers and sellers alike, the best of business over the four fabulous days of HOFEX.

And I invite you to make time to eat, drink and be merry in Hong Kong, Asia's food and fun city.

Thank you.