

Speech by FS at IATA World Cargo Symposium (English only)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the IATA World Cargo Symposium today (March 12):

Mr Walsh (Director General of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Mr Willie Walsh), Mr Sullivan (Global Head of Cargo of the IATA, Mr Brendan Sullivan), Jack (Chairman of the Airport Authority Hong Kong, Mr Jack So), Ronald (Chief Executive Officer of Cathay Group, Mr Ronald Lam), distinguished speakers and guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning and a warm welcome to this year's IATA World Cargo Symposium Asia, right here in Hong Kong.

Today marks a milestone – the first time that Hong Kong has hosted this event.

I'm delighted to welcome you – some 1 900 high-flying industry leaders and professionals covering the entire cargo-supply chain, as well as academics, media and so many others – to Hong Kong for this three-day, mega-gathering.

Long renowned for its strategic location, world-class infrastructure and logistics network, we are a global nexus for the international trade and cargo business.

In 2023, Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) handled around 4.3 million tonnes of cargo, and that would likely place us as the world's busiest cargo airport again.

The picture behind this magnificent volume is Hong Kong's strong infrastructure and extensive air network. Just before the pandemic, HKIA connected to over 220 destinations with more than 1 100 flights per day. And we are recovering. At the end of last year, passenger throughput recovered to 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. This year, we will see full recovery. And we're just getting going.

Our infrastructure is expanding. This, of course, includes the commissioning of our Airport's Three-Runway System before the end of this year. The System will boost our capacity to handle 120 million passengers and more than 10 million tonnes of cargo per year by 2035.

For cargo processing, last year, HKIA also hosted the expansion of DHL's Central Asia Hub, as well as the completion of the Cainiao Smart Gateway. They were followed by UPS which will develop a new hub facility at the Airport.

Meanwhile, we are also working closely with our sister cities in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) so that our airport will better serve as GBA's

logistics gateway, and the premier air cargo hub in the region. To this end, we are rapidly developing intermodal cargo transshipment mode in collaboration with other GBA cities such as Dongguan. For goods from the GBA using the HKIA for export, security screening and customs clearance will just get faster and more efficient. Likewise, we are working with Zhuhai to develop international cargo business together.

Ladies and gentlemen, for all the edges and development plans of the HKIA, our vision is just getting bigger. Let me highlight two development directions, which I have set out in this year's Budget.

The first concerns air connectivity. Leveraging the Three-Runway System and our country's support of the "Air Silk Road", Hong Kong is keen on expanding our aviation network, particularly with countries along the Belt and Road. At the same time, we will seek to further enhance our air connections with the Mainland, and strengthen the airport's connectivity with the GBA so that it will open up a larger hinterland and serve more passengers and cargo. By enhancing connectivity, we will help bolster trade in goods, enhance two-way flow of tourists and strengthen people-to-people bonds with the regions concerned.

The second is green transition. For the aviation sector, "sustainability" has become the name of the game. The theme of this year's Symposium – "Driving Sustainable and Inclusive Growth" – rightly says it all. For Hong Kong, we are pressing ahead with green aviation. Of course, our Airport has pledged net zero by 2050. And we will promote the wider use of sustainable aviation fuel, or SAF, in Hong Kong. In addition to streamlining procedures for transportation and storage of SAF, we are studying various facilitation measures and the necessary infrastructure.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we all gather here for this three-day symposium and discuss a wide range of issues, from digitalisation to sustainability, e-commerce, and more, I have no doubt that this will be a platform where new ideas are bred, and new business opportunities are created.

On that note, may I express heartfelt thanks to the IATA for choosing Hong Kong as the host city for this year's Symposium. Full of business opportunities aside, I am sure you will see for yourselves the openness, vibrancy and diversity that the city continues to uphold.

I wish you all a rewarding Symposium, and a memorable stay in Hong Kong, the world's East-meets-West cultural capital. I also wish you the best of business in this Year of the Dragon – a year for global cargo, for all of us, to take flight.

Thank you.