

Speech by FS at In Style: Hong Kong Gala Dinner in Ho Chi Minh City (English only)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at In Style: Hong Kong Gala Dinner in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, today (September 20):

Deputy Minister Le (Deputy Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam, Mr Lê Hoài Trung), Dr Vu Tien Loc (President and Chairman of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry), Vincent (Chairman, Hong Kong Trade Development Council, Mr Vincent Lo), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening.

I'm delighted to be here, in Ho Chi Minh, the business, financial and cultural capital of Vietnam, a city teeming with people and outsized promise.

Given the entertainment, the fashion and the fabulous dinner soon to come, and this fabulous venue with the "Starry Night on the Waterfront" theme, I would say we are in for a great evening, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Yes, tonight's Hong Kong Gala Dinner is among the highlights of "In Style, Hong Kong", the largest Hong Kong promotion ever to take place in Vietnam.

It all began this morning, with the opening of the "In Style, Hong Kong Expo", a designer fair featuring quality lifestyle products from Hong Kong.

For those of you unable to attend today's trade fair, there's good news. The exhibition, showcasing the designer offerings of more than 130 Hong Kong companies, is open all day tomorrow. Along with product displays, the expo includes business-matching opportunities and thematic seminars.

I invite you to see for yourself why Hong Kong brand products can make a difference for your company. Your business.

A symposium, highlighting Hong Kong's world-class business services, also took place today at the GEM Center. And I'm pleased to note, the event attracted more than 800 Vietnamese business leaders, government officials and SMEs.

And if you missed the symposium, the key takeaway is this: Hong Kong's renowned business services, from finance to design, branding, logistics and much more, can help Vietnamese companies expand their business in the massive markets of mainland China and throughout the Asian region.

It helps, of course, that Hong Kong and the 10 Member States of ASEAN –

Vietnam included of course – signed a Free Trade Agreement, and the related Investment Agreement, just last November. That the agreements, which take effect beginning in January, will undoubtedly boost trade and investment ties between Hong Kong, Vietnam and the other nations of ASEAN. Those ties, Ladies and Gentlemen, were designed to expand opportunity long down that cooperation road.

Tonight, of course, we celebrate Hong Kong culture. You had a taste of that at our pre-dinner cocktail, with its Hong Kong Pub atmosphere and craft beers micro-brewed in Hong Kong.

And there's much more cutting-edge culture and Hong Kong innovation on the way. Including a four-course dinner designed exclusively for this gala evening by two Michelin one-star chefs. They're here from Hong Kong just for you.

I must say I'm just as eager as you are to savour their creations. But before that please allow me just a few words on how we view, and support, culture in Hong Kong.

We believe that the creative industries are a potential powerhouse, that they can both help driving diversified economic growth and making Hong Kong a more attractive global city.

Like Vietnam in its own way, Hong Kong is a glittering confluence of East and West. That has given us – and continues to give us – a bounty of cultural diversity. International art fairs and galleries have made Hong Kong among the largest art markets in the world.

We are blessed, as well, with major arts festivals and performing arts groups. And, later this year, the Xiqu Centre, a showcase for Chinese opera, will open in the West Kowloon Cultural District, one of the world's largest cultural projects.

In May, the Hong Kong SAR Government injected US\$128 million into our dedicated funding scheme for the creative industries.

One of the fastest-growing of those industries is design. Hong Kong designer creativity and talent will be showcased tonight in the sand art and fashion performance, all interspersed with dinner.

Let me add that design takes centre stage in Hong Kong every December, with Business of Design Week. The international extravaganza of design excellence is the largest event of its kind in Asia – and among the biggest in the world.

I invite Vietnamese designers and trade organisations to join us for Hong Kong Business of Design Week, December 3-8. Your not-to-be missed opportunity to explore the latest in design and innovation, to talk business with a world of creative leaders.

In short, ladies and gentlemen, while In Style Hong Kong is here to expand our good trade and investment ties, we are also here to explore the

boundless opportunities that culture and the arts, education, tourism and more, offer our two economies, our two peoples. Today and tomorrow and deep into this 21st century of promise.

Before I close, allow me to express my gratitude to the Hong Kong Trade Development Council for organising "In Style, Hong Kong" and for bringing us together this grand gala evening.

Thank you.