

Speech by SCED at plenary session of APEC Ministerial Meeting (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, at the plenary session themed "enabling an innovative environment for a sustainable future and affirming an equitable and inclusive future for all" at the 34th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in San Francisco, the United States, today (November 14, San Francisco time):

Good afternoon, Chair and fellow colleagues.

On behalf of the Hong Kong, China (HKC) delegation, I would like to express our appreciation to the United States (US) for the arrangements made for the AMM.

Let me also thank the World Bank for the insightful remarks. A World Bank's recent forecast shows that the pace of recovery and growth across different regions is expected to be limited and uneven. As the global economies continue to grapple with the deeply intertwined challenges, we must work harder to improve connectivity and to better leverage APEC as a platform for co-operation. Allow me to focus on two areas in this regard.

First, APEC should further strengthen co-operation on supply chain connectivity to promote economic resilience against future shocks. Pandemics, climate change and natural disasters have all exposed the existing vulnerabilities and manifested the need for co-operation to ensure a stable and resilient global supply chain. We should continue to support and build on APEC's good work, including through advancing the implementation of the APEC Connectivity Blueprint and the Supply Chain Connectivity Framework Action Plan. The APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC)'s initiative to develop the MSME Supply Chain Resilience Toolkit is timely, and ABAC HKC will conduct a workshop in this regard in Hong Kong in a few weeks' time.

Second, APEC should advance real and practical co-operation to embrace digital economy as a new driving force for inclusive growth. Among others, ensuring equitable access to digital technologies is a key area to unleash the full potential of digital transformation. HKC calls for accelerating implementation of the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap in a comprehensive manner, with bridging the digital divide at the top of APEC's digital agenda. I appreciate ABAC's work this year in building digital trust and enhancing governance in the digital economy, which lays a solid foundation for further growth.

Allow me to outline a few of HKC's domestic measures to ramp up support to empower micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and groups with

untapped economic potential to leverage the digital economy, including through enhancing their digital uptake, promoting the adoption of fintech, and opening up government data for free consumption. The Government has set aside US\$64 million (HK\$500 million) for a Digital Transformation Support Pilot Programme to facilitate MSMEs' digitalisation. In addition, to help MSMEs navigate through the economic headwinds owing to the tightened fiscal environment and slacking consumer spending, we have reinforced export credit insurance to support MSMEs in cross-boundary transactions with confidence and zest. To enhance the efficiency of financing services for MSMEs, we will also connect the Commercial Data Interchange, an exchange platform covering commercial data for credit underwriting, to the Government's Consented Data Exchange Gateway within this year, so that the finance industry can obtain more useful data for accelerating credit underwriting.

Furthermore, HKC will have a new Digital Policy Office to expedite digitalisation of government services and opening up of more government data. I will also chair an inter-departmental E-commerce Development Task Force to implement policies assisting MSMEs in harnessing the business opportunities brought about by e-commerce.

As a leading regional economic forum, APEC is ideally positioned to catalyse international co-operation on e-commerce development and digital inclusion. By enhancing policy dialogues and workshops and sharing best practices, we could help business of all sizes, especially MSMEs, seize the immense opportunities of the digital economy.

Thank you.