

# Speech by SEE at COP28 China Corner's Side Event (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, at the China Corner's Side Event of the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) co-organised by Friends of the Earth (HK) and the Financial Services Development Council in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, yesterday (December 6, Dubai time):

Salina (Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Financial Services), Ms Salina Yan), Plato (Secretary General of the Treelion Foundation and Chairperson of Friends of the Earth (HK), Mr Plato Yip), Daniel (Vice-Chairman of the Financial Services Development Council, Mr Daniel Fung), distinguished speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very happy to see many friends here in Dubai. Special thank goes to Friends of the Earth (HK) and the Financial Services Development Council for organising today's platform. Talking about climate change, I think we all know that China has pledged to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060 and carbon peak before 2030. For Hong Kong, as we have reached our peak in 2014, we believe we should contribute more, and therefore we set the target to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050. Because of our efforts over the years, our carbon emissions has reduced by a quarter, as at today, the per capita emission is about 4.5 tonnes. You may wonder what does the 4.5 tonnes mean, as a reference, the United States' carbon emission is 14.4 tonnes per capita, the European Union is 7.7 tonnes per capita, we are not doing bad.

Nevertheless, we need to look to the future, how are we going to further reduce our carbon, I think you have this pamphlet with you, Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050, that is our plan on how to further reduce our carbon, looking at the sources of carbon emissions in Hong Kong, we have developed a four-pronged strategy. The first is we have to achieve a net-zero electricity generation in Hong Kong. The second one is to promote green buildings and energy efficiency. The third one is to promote green transport. The fourth is to reduce our waste.

You may wonder why waste is an issue relevant to carbon emissions, because in Hong Kong, we still use landfill for disposal of our waste, when the garbage is in the landfill, they will decay and emit methane, which is a very strong greenhouse gas, therefore we have to deal with this problem also.

And I can tell you about three indicators of these strategies. One is that we already stopped the building of new coal-fired power plants since 1997, therefore as at today, the contribution of coal in our fuel mix for electricity generation in Hong Kong has been reduced to about a quarter, with half using natural gas, and the remaining quarter by nuclear power supplied from the mainland. We will stop using coal for power generation before 2035.

As for promoting green transport, we have set our target to stop the registration of new fossil-fuel powered private cars before 2035, including hybrid. How well we are doing on that? In the first half of this year, out of 10 new private cars in Hong Kong, six or seven are EVs (electric vehicles).

To deal with the greenhouse gas emissions from landfill, we have set a timetable, to stop using landfills before 2035, that is difficult. We are investing lots of money to build waste-to-energy incinerators in Hong Kong, we have to build sufficient waste-to-energy incinerators before 2035 so that we can stop using all the landfills.

On adaptation, we experienced two super typhoons this year, and also record-breaking rainstorms that caused serious flooding in the city. Therefore, the Government has set up a taskforce led by the Civil Engineering and Development Department to look at our critical infrastructure, where they are, what they are, what are the design standards, the engineering standard they have to apply so that in the future they can stand for extreme weather brought about by climate change.

And I can assure you, whether or not the world can achieve carbon neutrality before 2050, the climate will continue to change in the next 15 years. We must be well prepared for it.

And the last one is we also need to deal with what we call resilience problem. I have mentioned about the two typhoons and the flooding for this year in Hong Kong. Therefore, we need to have a contingency plan which will help us to mobilise our different departments for different workplaces, to rescue people, to recover those damages, etc. And we have set up a task force to look into this matters. And also, why our Hong Kong Observatory is now working with the Drainage Services Department to work on a model using big data and artificial intelligence so that in future, we can try to predict flooding risks a few hours before they actually happen, so that we can mobilise our staff to get prepared for it. That model is expected to come into operation before the typhoon season in next year.

Whilst Hong Kong is working hard to combat climate change, what Hong Kong can do to contribute to other parts of the world? This morning I had a meeting with the Secretary General of the Executive Council of Dubai and he told me Hong Kong actually is a regional hub, a gateway from China to other parts of the world. He has visited Shenzhen earlier on, and he saw many innovative products, many new technologies which can help greening our future, reducing our carbon emissions, and help building our cities, our infrastructure in low carbon, green and safe way.

He said Hong Kong is a gateway for these green products to other parts of the world. He also named Hong Kong is an international finance hub, international financial centre. That is indeed what he and I believe. He has a lot of new ideas, insightful messages about fintech, about blockchain, about our green bond, about all sorts of green financial tools.

We can help managing the issue of climate change. Some people are very pessimistic on whether eventually we will be able to win the battle. I want to put one example here. Some of you may remember the term, ozone hole. Do you remember it? Actually, 40 years ago, people on earth were very worried about the ozone hole issue because the ozone layer got a big hole and if the hole got bigger and bigger, human kind may extinct from the earth. Therefore, in 1987, all the countries worked together and we had the Montreal Protocol. And after three decades of effort, the ozone hole has stabilised. And the scientists had told us that the ozone hole will recover within four decades. I think that is a very good example. If we are determined, if we are willing to accept innovative ideas, if we work together, we can save the earth, and guard against what happened because of climate change. And therefore, ladies and gentlemen, we have all the innovations here and we have all the talents here. We can work together and contribute. Let us work together and fight the climate change battle. We will win again. Thank you.