

Speech by STL at 2024 Greater Bay Maritime Development Conference (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, through videoconferencing at the 2024 Greater Bay Maritime Development Conference today (November 14):

Vice-Chairman Leung (Vice-Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Mr C Y Leung), Director-General Wang (Member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee, Director-General of Qianhai Authority, Mr Wang Shourui), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to join you this morning at the 2024 Greater Bay Maritime Development Conference. The two-day event gathers here stakeholders and experts from the maritime sector to exchange ideas and knowledge, and to build new networks and relationships, which I believe would provide an excellent platform to ignite inspiration and discussion over various key maritime topics.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The Outline Development Plan explicitly emphasises the importance of enhancing the overall competitiveness of the Pearl River Delta port cluster. The National 14th Five-Year Plan also indicates clear support for Hong Kong's development into an international shipping hub.

Hong Kong has been fostering the development of our maritime industry. As a "super-connector", we have been consolidating our position as an international maritime centre. At the same time, with the strong support from the Central Government, Hong Kong continues to offer to the GBA our traditional advantages as a free port with high efficiency and international connectivity. Through the close collaboration with the Mainland, we continue to contribute to the strategic development framework of our country.

For instance, the collaboration efforts, which resulted in the commencement of the Chongqing-Shenzhen Rail-Sea Express Service in August 2024 this year, has reduced the transit time between Chongqing and Yantian Port from five days to just two, and enables cargoes from the Chengdu-Chongqing area to reach Hong Kong within just three days. It is expected that this newly launched freight train model will significantly expand the cargo reach of both Hong Kong and Yantian Port, boosting their cargo volumes. It also facilitates the development of Chongqing as a "sea-rail logistics hub" in the region, allowing the GBA to better serve our country's need. Moreover, terminal operators in Hong Kong are actively engaging in various initiatives on the further development of the port hinterland, for example through

developing the intermodal transport connection with ports in other cities in the GBA, with a view to attracting more cargo sources to Hong Kong and enhancing Hong Kong's attractiveness as a cargo consolidation and transshipment hub, as well as bolstering the overall throughput of the port. The Government will continue to strengthen co-operation with the western part of Guangdong and other neighbouring areas, and make good use of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge to expand the catchment area of our cargo services.

Leveraging our unique institutional strengths including our common law system, simple and low tax regime, and free flow of information and capital, Hong Kong has developed a vibrant maritime cluster of over 1 100 port and maritime-related companies, providing a great variety of quality maritime services, ranging from ship owning, ship agency and management, ship broking, marine insurance, maritime legal and arbitration services, to marine surveying and classification societies. Hong Kong always stands ready to provide quality services to shipping companies of the Mainland and serve as the springboard to the international community.

In addition, the Hong Kong Shipping Registry is widely recognised internationally. We are the fourth largest globally in terms of gross tonnage and is renowned for its quality and excellence with a low Port State Control detention rate of 0.81 per cent as compared with the world average of 3.39 per cent in 2023. Shipping companies from the Mainland have been very supportive to our shipping registry. In 2023, Chinese shipping companies have been the shipowners with the highest gross tonnage in our shipping registry as well as recipients of awards for outstanding performance in Port State Control. We are proud to serve our Mainland counterparts and will continue to enrich our support services for them.

In the Policy Address published last month, our Chief Executive announced a series of new initiatives to bolster Hong Kong's strengths as an international maritime centre. These include: reconstituting the existing advisory body into a high-level Hong Kong Maritime and Port Development Board for deepened participation by the trade with enhanced research, promotion and talent nurturing capabilities, promoting development of high-value added maritime services, advancing development of a green maritime centre, and creating a commodity trading ecosystem, among others. Hong Kong will continue to actively engage with other GBA cities to look for opportunities for collaboration and complement one another strengths to enhance the competitiveness of the GBA ports as a whole in order to achieve win-win co-operation for all.

In just a moment, the Transport and Logistics Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, the Shenzhen Municipal Transport Bureau and the Shenzhen Qianhai Authority will sign a Memorandum of Understanding on maritime co-operation. This is the second government-to-government Memorandum of Understanding signed by Hong Kong at the GBA Conference, further to the one with Guangdong Port Authority signed in 2023. I am glad that Hong Kong and our counterparts in the GBA have a shared vision of creating mutual benefits through better co-ordination and collaboration regarding the development of the maritime industries and manpower training,

among others. I believe the constructive efforts from all sides will be conducive to enhancing the influence of the GBA port cluster towards the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, while the global maritime industry experiences its ebb and flow, I am confident that by working together, we can ride the tide ahead. I wish you all a successful and fruitful Conference, and let us keep this positive momentum going. Thank you.

