

Speech by SCED at third Belt and Road Summit (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, at the plenary session on "Action through Collaboration: Case Studies on Signature Belt and Road Projects" of the third Belt and Road Summit today (June 28):

Panel Chair Bernard (Convenor of the Non-official Members of the Executive Council, Mr Bernard Chan), panel speakers, ladies and gentlemen,

As the co-host of this summit and on behalf of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, we welcome once again all of you to come to this first plenary session, in which we will try to home in on Belt and Road actions through collaboration.

I think the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Georgia and Hong Kong just now is indeed a strong testimony of Hong Kong as well as Georgia's strong commitment and mutual collaborative efforts in pursuing our common interest in facilitating unimpeded trade under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Particularly at the time when we see an overcast of trade protection and the looming storm of trade disputes among some members of the international community, the smooth negotiation and swift conclusion of this Hong Kong-Georgia FTA is a clear and loud message to the world that through collaboration, we can build trade alliance, and through removing trade barriers, we secure mutual benefits that the sum of which is surely bigger than the lone interest of respective players. And we will continue to do more.

Just in the past 12 months, Hong Kong has secured three new sets of FTAs with 12 economies, more than double the number that we have achieved in the last two decades. Our new FTAs range from one with our closest partner, Macao, which is also a partner in forming the greater Bay Area, to a recently signed FTA with the 10 members of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), which is a union that has emerged as Hong Kong's second largest trading partner in the last decade or so, and just now, with Georgia today, which will become our springboard partner into our respective hinterlands at the two far ends of our big continent of Asia.

What we have witnessed today from the signing of the FTA tells you that Hong Kong connects to countries and economies along the Belt and Road, not just by lip service, but by way of providing binding and trusted agreements that open doors to all, be they markets big or small, old or new.

While these FTAs are signed between Hong Kong and the respective countries and economies, all the market access offered in our FTAs is in fact

made available to most if not all companies and businesses that operate in Hong Kong in our typical open, transparent and level-playing field manner.

But what Hong Kong offers is more than just market access. At the press conference of this summit, I mentioned five distinctive areas that Hong Kong could offer itself as a platform for collaboration with all those who want to leverage on the opportunities arising from the Belt and Road Initiative. They are policy, positioning, professional services, project inception and partnering.

For policy, I mean the special institutional arrangement and insights that Hong Kong enjoys with our Central Government as well as governments of all Belt and Road partnering economies. Hong Kong, as a Special Administrative Region of our country, is the first and still the only city that has entered into a collaborative and co-operative arrangement with Beijing over what Hong Kong can do in promoting the Belt and Road Initiative through our own strength.

Again, as a Special Administrative Region, our constitution provides Hong Kong the ability to enter into bilateral and multilateral trade and investment agreements with other economies. All these provide Hong Kong with exceptional government-to-government trade relationships that are in tandem with the rule-based multilateral trading system, i.e. the World Trade Organization.

For positioning, I mean the unique advantages that Hong Kong enjoys under the "one country, two systems" that provides international businesses an exceptional access through Hong Kong into the markets along the Belt and Road. Such advantages include the unique economic freedom, free flow of capital, people and information, and the most welcoming and competitive trading environment that we operate.

For professional services, I mean the availability of a full spectrum of services that are needed in support of global businesses that can operate from Hong Kong. And not only do they benchmark against the highest international standards, they have also acquired the necessary knowledge and skill in handling cross-country, multinational and interdisciplinary transactions.

For project inception, I mean the natural advantage of having Hong Kong as the commercial hub that is the marketplace for deals that are being made. The 200-plus projects that the TDC (Hong Kong Trade Development Council) is putting up on the table today for business matching speaks for itself that Hong Kong is naturally the domain name for Belt and Road projects, and we will continue to develop this depository of Belt and Road projects, as well as the platform for project inception and business matching.

Last but not least, for partnering, it is self-evident that this is exactly what we are doing today in this very place. I hope the coming sessions will offer you many more concrete examples, case studies and stories

of successes, and even learning experience that would help us in finding opportunities arising from the Belt and Road Initiative. We believe you have come to the right place at the right time, and I hope to be able to see you and talk to you more during the day. Thank you.



[ENB commends participants of Charter on External Lighting](#)

The Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, today (June 28) officiated at the award ceremony for the Charter on External Lighting to commend about 4 800 participants for joining hands to implement the Charter to provide the public with a better environment conducive to sleep and minimise energy wastage. Mr Wong emphasised that the support of various sectors is instrumental to the implementation of the Charter, which aims to encourage them to switch off unnecessary lights at night.

The awardees came from sectors including building management, property development, hotels and catering, retail, laundry, banking, telecommunications and real estate agencies, as well as schools, public utilities and public/non-governmental organisations. Among them, over 3 300 participants fulfilling the pledge to switch off external lighting from 11pm to 7am were awarded the Platinum Award, while some 1 200 participants were awarded the Gold Award for switching off external lighting from midnight to 7am. In addition, more than 200 participants newly signed up to the Charter this year were granted certificates.

The ceremony also recognised the contributions made by three Partners of the Charter. The Chairperson of the Working Group on the Promotion of the Charter on External Lighting, Ms Caroline Mak, expressed appreciation to them for promoting corporate social responsibility and through their networks encouraging premises with external lighting installations to sign up to the Charter.

The Environment Bureau launched the Charter in April 2016 to invite owners of and responsible persons for external lighting installations to switch off lighting installations with decorative, promotional or advertising purposes that affect the outdoor environment during preset times (i.e. 11pm or midnight to 7am on the following day). The list of participants is available on the Charter's dedicated website (www.charteronexternallighting.gov.hk).

"The Government will commence a review on the effectiveness of the Charter, and consider the next step with regard to the findings," Mr Wong said.

[SCED speaks on Free Trade Agreement between Hong Kong and Georgia](#)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, at a media session on the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed between Hong Kong and Georgia at the third Belt and Road Summit today (June 28):

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: May I echo the Minister's (Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, Mr Genadi Arveladze) remarks that this is indeed a very useful, comprehensive and important Free Trade Agreement between Hong Kong and Georgia. One would ask as our two economies are some distance apart, in fact at the far ends of the big continent of Asia where we are in the East Asia and Georgia in the Eurasia region, what brings us together. I think it is the common commitment and belief that free trade will boost economic development, not just in our respective economy, but for the bigger world.

Hong Kong people may not necessarily know that much about Georgia. But I believe that this Free Trade Agreement will bring Hong Kong very much into the part of Eurasia because Georgia is there like Hong Kong in Asia. I have noted that an index, which is commonly known in Hong Kong, the Heritage Foundation's Economic Freedom Index, where Hong Kong is ranked number one, 24 years in a row, Georgia is ranked number 16 among the 180 countries that they have surveyed. It is one of the more open and pro-trade economies gaining tremendous economic growth in the last decade or so.

As the Minister mentioned, an FTA is never easy to be concluded as a trade document because it cuts across many sectors. But we have done this with a very smooth negotiation and swift conclusion in two rounds of discussion within eight months. I think that signifies how much importance we attached to this document and also how like-minded Hong Kong and Georgia are on the subject of free trade. As the Minister mentioned, it is comprehensive because it covers a wide spectrum of areas from trade in goods to trade in

services. It is also of a very high standard – we are not just benchmarking WTO (World Trade Organization) rules, there are some areas that are beyond WTO requirements. That hopefully set the scene for future FTAs where we will benchmark a higher standard.

This is very important at this time of the global trading system seeing trade protection and trade disputes looming. The fact that we are able to strike the deal and set a very high standard by this Free Trade Agreement is a very strong testimony that we do not believe trade is a zero-sum game. This FTA has a very major strategic importance to Hong Kong because we are talking about spreading our markets, stretching and reaching out to the wider world as we continue to be the world's global trading centre.

I think Eurasia is an important region because it crosses two continents. It is also a very important location where we can tap into the Eurasia market and all the way into East Europe and further. We believe this would open a new chapter for both of us. This also reinforces our continuous efforts in the last 12 months as we continue to use free trade agreements or investment agreements to build our trade connections. In the last 12 months, we have concluded an FTA with Macao and a very important one with ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations). And the one with Georgia is also of strategic importance.

Reporter: The trade tensions around the regions, like between the United States and China, have been intensifying. Do you have confidence that Hong Kong could withstand the harm brought by the trade tensions?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I was exactly saying that it is saddening to see that after so many years of clear demonstration that free trade could bring economic prosperity for all, it is unfortunate we are still seeing a lot of trade disputes and conflicts looming in the world between players. What Hong Kong could do on one hand is to build defence, and to critically assess what impact that would be posed to Hong Kong, and also to take measures to safeguard our own interest. But a more positive move is to build more alliances of like-minded free traders, like Hong Kong and Georgia, through all the free trade agreements that we have been signing over the years with major partners, including with ASEAN last year and also this one with Georgia, a country strategically located in Eurasia. We believe these free trade agreements demonstrate a very strong case that trade is not a zero-sum game. Through taking down trade barriers, we are actually seeing more prospects of economic growth arising from trade.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

First round of FEHD anti-rodent

operation in designated target areas concludes with positive results

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) concluded the first round of the anti-rodent operation in designated target areas in various districts on June 22. During the operation, the FEHD collected 630 dead rodents, caught 476 rodents in traps and took out 374 prosecutions. The operation effectively enhanced rodent prevention and control work at the district level.

An FEHD spokesman said today (June 28), "The FEHD launched the first round of the two-month anti-rodent operation in designated target areas on April 23 and adopted multi-pronged strategies, including improving environmental hygiene rodent disinfection and enforcement actions, to combat the rodent problem. In the past two months, the FEHD strengthened rodent disinfection work at problematic spots such as rear lanes, refuse collection points, markets, hawker bazaars, cooked food markets and construction sites. The department placed poisonous bait and traps at 5 350 and 8 459 locations respectively, and destroyed 343 rat holes, with 630 dead rodents collected and 476 rodents caught in traps.

"Apart from strengthening rodent elimination work, FEHD staff members also enhanced street cleaning services and cleaning of public markets and hawker bazaars in the target areas, including sweeping and cleaning of streets and rear lanes, and clearance of refuse and waste on the streets, in public markets and at hawker bazaars, so as to keep the environment clean.

"In addition, the FEHD stepped up inspections of food premises, markets, hawker bazaars and cooked food markets. Enforcement action against food premises causing poor environmental hygiene conditions, food preparation and scullery at rear lanes, and improper handling and disposal of rubbish was strengthened. The FEHD conducted 13 916 inspections, issued 3 830 health advisories, 2 069 verbal warnings and 25 warning letters, 52 statutory notices, 619 fixed penalty notices and took out 374 prosecutions."

To increase public awareness of rodent prevention, the FEHD stepped up public education and publicity during the operation. A total of 113 talks were arranged for building management offices of private buildings, persons-in-charge of food premises, and market and hawker stall operators to provide information and technical advice on rodent prevention and control.

The spokesman said that the FEHD will spare no efforts in the rodent prevention and control work. The second phase of the territory-wide anti-rodent campaign, lasting for 10 weeks, will soon commence on July 2. He called on all sectors of the community to continue to actively participate in the anti-rodent campaign and eliminate the three survival conditions of rodents in their daily life, namely food, harbourage and passages, meaning the elimination of the food sources and hiding places of rodents as well as

blocking their dispersal routes, so as to work together for a clean and hygienic community.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, June 28, 2018 is 102.2 (up 0.3 against yesterday's index).