

**Hong Kong, China's Statement for
70th Session of the United Nations
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)**
(to be delivered in the ministerial segment)

Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity

Your Excellency the Chairman, Executive Secretary, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Hong Kong, China (HKC) delegation, I would like to congratulate the Government of Thailand and the ESCAP Secretariat on the very successful organisation of this meeting. I am also grateful to the Government and people of Thailand for the very warm hospitality extended to us.

Economic Outlook for Hong Kong, China

2. I would like to begin my remarks with an overview of HKC's economy. Our economy grew by 2.9% for 2013, a marked improvement over 1.5% in 2012. In the first quarter of 2014, our economy grew moderately by 2.5%.

3. Looking ahead, the recovery of the advanced economies, if it gains further momentum, should be supportive to Asia's exports, including those of HKC. Nonetheless, the external environment remains unsteady, and is still subject to various uncertainties, including those arising from monetary policy normalisation of the United States, sluggish recovery of the Eurozone economies, and heightened geopolitical tensions in various regions of the world.

Connectivity as Driver of Economic Growth

4. Against this backdrop, HKC emphasises the importance of strengthening connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, with due regard to the vast area and diversity of the region.

5. Improved connectivity, by facilitating secure and seamless flow of goods, services, people, capital and technology for the development of global and regional supply chains and value chains, fuels and sustains the economic development of the region. Being the most populous region in the world, the Asia Pacific region will be able to boost productivity and generate demands by improving connectivity within and across economies, especially in rural areas.

6. Improved connectivity also plays a significant role in emergency response by reducing disaster risk and strengthening resiliency. The natural disasters in the past few years, having regard to their scale and frequency, highlight the importance of connectivity.

HKC's Efforts in Enhancing Connectivity

7. Challenges ahead of us are many and varied, given the different stages of economic, social and technological development across the region; the huge and long-term investment required for physical infrastructure and human resources development; as well as the fast-changing landscape constantly re-shaped by information and communications technology (ICT) in our move towards a more interconnected Asia Pacific region. I would like to share our experience in this regard.

Physical Connectivity

8. We give priority to promoting physical connectivity through strengthening transportation networks, developing intermodal transfer facilities, advancing cross-border energy networks, achieving high-speed broadband access, etc.

9. HKC has been implementing ten major infrastructure projects and other infrastructure projects of varying scales since 2007. We are proceeding with the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link; amongst others. We are pressing ahead with the planning for a third runway of our international airport and are progressively liberalising our air services regime with a view to expanding our aviation network.

10. There is no one-size-fits-all approach in taking forward infrastructure projects. While public funding is our major source of financing, we adopt a mixture of modes of operation and financing to deliver infrastructure projects, taking into account commercial viability, completion time, etc.

Institutional Connectivity

11. We see opportunities in advancing institutional connectivity through, for example, enhancing regulatory coherence and cooperation among domestic institutions, promoting cross-border financial cooperation, modernising customs clearance arrangements; and expanding the application of trusted ICT and e-commerce environment in a more simplified, harmonised, transparent, integrated, coordinated and coherent manner.

12. In 1997, HKC started to establish a single electronic platform for the trading community to submit commonly used trade documents via private service providers electronically. We have also put a legal framework in place to support safe and trusted e-commerce. Through the Hong Kong Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Centre, we coordinate and collaborate with regional and international Computer Emergency Response Teams on cross-border information security incidents.

People-to-people Connectivity

13. HKC attaches importance to people-to-people connectivity. We welcome visitors and adopt a liberal visa policy. Nationals of about 170 foreign countries and territories may come for business, social or pleasure visits visa-free for a stay ranging from 7 to 180 days. We value the benefits of sharing ideas through advancing work on cross-border education, cooperating in science and technology, as well as easing the mobility of people for business, tourism and cross-border education and research, and so on.

14. We cherish forging bilateral agreements on cooperation in higher education. We have already signed relevant bilateral Memoranda of

Understanding with some economies, including the Mainland of China, Korea, New Zealand and Viet Nam. Besides, we maintain an open and liberal policy towards professionals entering the city for employment.

Mechanisms to Enhance Regional Connectivity

15. We welcome exploring different mechanisms to develop robust and active engagement, partnership and cooperation with relevant stakeholders such as the business associations, academia, think-tanks, international organisations and sub-regional organisations to leverage on their insights and expertise, to facilitate knowledge generation and sharing, to build synergy, and to identify areas of mutual interest for cooperative activities with a view to advancing the regional connectivity agenda.

16. We should adopt an open mind on all viable options. We should not lose sight of the importance of capacity building as well as economic and technical cooperation. At the same time, we need to set our priorities right in view of the human, natural and financial resources available.

17. The ultimate objective is to strive for a triple-win for the environment, business and community at large at the domestic level; as well as sustainable development at the sub-regional or regional levels with different comparative advantages.

Closing Remarks

18. In closing, HKC sees the importance of improving the physical infrastructure, smoothening interoperability and reinforcing borderless interaction and cooperation at all levels through a multi-pronged approach, with a view to addressing various chokepoints at the border, behind the border and across the border.

19. Enhancing connectivity is by no means an easy task. It cannot be accomplished without close collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, both private and public. HKC looks forward to working with ESCAP and members in further promoting and enhancing regional connectivity in the region. Thank you.

[about 1,050 words]