

## **Opening Remarks by Dr Y.K. Pang, HKTB Chairman**

Good morning, friends, colleagues, and partners.

We are going through extraordinary times which may be keeping us apart from each other physically, but it will not stop us from staying connected.

Today, our Executive Director and colleagues from our offices around the world, will speak to you and share our strategic framework for our tourism revival, along with the latest market situation report. The reason for this meeting today is to bring our ideas and our experiences together as we prepare to set out on the road to recovery.

The coronavirus pandemic has had a devastating impact on the global tourism industry. Our visitor arrivals have dropped to practically zero, and every tourism attraction and event has been closed, cancelled or postponed. The Hong Kong Tourism Board however is not closed, and there is a great deal that we have been working on, and for all of us to do in the coming weeks and months.

As well as ensuring we keep open our communication channels and provide the very latest information to future visitors and travel trade partners, we have been reaching out to stakeholders and drawing on their advice as we plan our recovery. I am personally chairing the industry task force for industry updates and planning for tourism recovery.

We have announced HK\$400 million in support for Hong Kong and overseas travel agencies, hotels, airlines, and attractions, as well as businesses in the retail, dining, and MICE sectors. That support will help to bolster our efforts to rebuild consumer confidence in Hong Kong and lure visitors back to the city. Dane will speak to you about this strategy in detail.

The most important point for us all to remember is that Covid-19 is much more than just an interruption to our tourism industry. It is an outbreak that will fundamentally reshape the global tourism landscape.

When it is finally over, tourism will be different. There will be changes in the way travellers choose their destinations, changes to the way they book their time away, and changes in the expectations they have of the places they visit.

In the post-pandemic world, safety and health is going to become a greater priority. Travellers will want to know more about the health situation of different destinations, regions, and ports-of-call. They will want to know more about the hygiene standards of their modes of transport and accommodation. They will even have different demands of their travel insurance.

# Tourism Update 24 / 4

People are likely to be more inclined to take short-haul rather than long-haul breaks, according to the latest market intelligence. In the short term after the pandemic, many will choose to take holidays in their home countries rather than go abroad. Many of those who do go abroad will opt for wellness-themed breaks or accommodations with correspondingly higher standards of hygiene and service.

The task confronting us is to adapt to these changing tastes and preferences, and draw on our considerable strengths to set new standards in service and hospitality quality, and compete more effectively for the tourism dollar.

It is often said that adversity makes you stronger. I don't entirely agree with that saying, but I do believe that adversity combined with an intelligent strategy can make us stronger as a destination.

There is no question this is one of the most difficult and challenging times we have faced in our lifetimes. We must rethink and reset our position in the global tourism market, and how we can attract more quality and high-yielding visitors for the sustainable tourism development of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's foundations are exceptionally strong. Ours is a diverse and resilient city with timeless appeal and a diversity of experiences for everyone, a destination which is underpinned by the spirit and ingenuity of our people. I am certain these qualities will help us rise above our current difficulties.

Ladies and gentlemen, however gloomy it may sometimes seem, it is always darkest before the dawn, and these clouds will pass, as surely as night turns into day and the sun will shine again. The task ahead for us is to prepare for the recovery of our tourism industry and adapt to the world that awaits us on the other side of the global pandemic so that we will be among the most attractive and competitive tourist destinations on the planet.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board greatly appreciate your unwavering support, and look forward to working closely with you and together set out today the first steps of our journey to a new and vibrant tourism future.

\*\*\*