

Speech at the Opening Ceremony of Symposium

19 July 2015

Mrs Carrie Lam, GBS, JP, Chief Secretary for Administration

Professor (Simon) Ho (President of HSMC), Professor Wang (Li-bing) (Programme Co-ordinator, UNESCO - Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development), Dr (Tom) Fong (Chairman of Symposium Organising Committee), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I'm pleased to join you for the opening ceremony of this Symposium on Sustainability and Bamboo.

Bamboo is a deeply rooted aspect of Chinese culture and features quite prominently in our daily lives. The bamboo, along with the plum blossom, the orchid and the chrysanthemum, are known as the Four Gentlemen, depicted for centuries through Chinese paintings and jade carvings for their beauty and character.

In particular, bamboo is celebrated for its resilience and perseverance. Bruce Lee, the Kung Fu master, once said that, "The stiffest tree is most easily cracked, while the bamboo survives by bending with the wind." We have long associated bamboo with strength of character, with integrity, elegance and surpassing flexibility.

All good reasons for Hang Seng Management College to turn to bamboo as its theme for HSMC International Sustainability Week, on its 35th anniversary.

My congratulations to the College, which over the years has evolved from a school of commerce to an excellent post-secondary college, awarding degrees and doing pioneering research. And personally, I am looking forward to the College becoming a university in due course.

My thanks, as well, to UNESCO - Asia Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development for spearheading this important symposium in conjunction with the College. Over the years, UNESCO has been giving Hong Kong a lot of support especially in our heritage conservation work.

And for bringing in international experts to share the latest insights into the value of bamboo in the pursuit of sustainability.

Hang Seng Management College embraced sustainability from its very beginnings. Indeed, it has adopted an education philosophy which emphasises both liberal education and professionalism. Its campus setting aims to encourage independent thinking, cultivate innovative minds, and nurture a caring spirit among its student body, bearing social responsibilities. Such a mindset is reflected in the College's design, which features green-building applications from the use of natural light to the chilled ceiling air-conditioning system, solar reflection devices and other elements. These have resulted in a reduction of electricity consumption in the SH Ho Academic Building by some 30 per cent.

In particular, the chilled-ceiling system makes use of ceiling-based radiant cooling panels coupled with chilled-water coils. This enhances thermal comfort by making use of convection and radiation.

Bamboo is also widely used in the campus, from its green roof to its bamboo furniture and other interior design features.

I'm pleased to say that these environmental efforts have not gone unnoticed. The SH Ho Academic Building has achieved a BEAM Plus Platinum Rating, making the College among the first higher-educational institutions in Hong Kong to be so recognised.

Sustainable development, according to the World Commission on Environment and Development, "Meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

In Hong Kong, we share with you the goal of promoting green buildings while, at the community level, we are pursuing a sustainable built environment. We are doing so through a three "Ps" approach: people, policy and partnership.

The first "P" is "people". In formulating public policy, our goal is to serve the people of Hong Kong, to safeguard their interests. The same people-oriented approach is among the first consideration in a sustainable built environment, which aims to facilitate enjoyable living and working in an environment which is clean, comfortable, safe, healthy, and keeps people connected.

In his 2015 Policy Address, our Chief Executive announced the "smart city" concept. A smart city caters to the needs of its people, with an emphasis on enhancing connectivity and walkability.

I am pleased to note that, with the Energizing Kowloon East initiative, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government will apply a smart city approach in urban planning. Among other things, we will work to improve pedestrian facilities and landscaping to enhance walkability, as well as review traffic signal time to improve traffic flow.

An incentive scheme has been included to encourage green-building features in private development, and a district cooling system is in place to keep the indoor areas of buildings comfortable, while reducing electricity consumption by one fifth.

Kowloon East aside, the smart city concept will be incorporated into the design of other areas, including the West Kowloon Cultural District now taking shape on 40 hectares of prime harbour-front land.

Buildings there will feature attractive shading, a district cooling system and solar-thermal water heating. A sustainable transportation system, including excellent public transport connections, cycling paths and pedestrians walkways, will also be provided.

The second "P" is "policy". The Hong Kong SAR Government is working to create policy that incorporates a sustainable built environment. In Hong Kong, buildings consume 90 per cent of our electricity. That's why we are leading by example in pursuing green initiatives, starting with our own government buildings.

For new government buildings with a construction floor area above 5 000 square metres, we have imposed a requirement that they must attain the second highest grade or above under the BEAM Plus, or other internationally recognised building environmental assessment.

We have also extended the maximum payback period for energy-efficiency measures in new government buildings from nine years to 12 years. With a longer payback period, the costs of energy-efficient features will be spread out over a longer period. It means that more efficient features, including energy-management systems and energy-efficient lifts, will become practical.

The third P is "partnership". Apart from leading by example, we've also put in place incentives to encourage private developers to conduct green-building assessments. When considering granting gross-floor area concessions, registration for BEAM Plus certification is required. We also require, by law, that commercial buildings achieve a certain level of electricity efficiency.

As a further step to achieving our own sustainable built environment, I am pleased to tell you that, in 2017, Hong Kong will host for the first time the World Sustainable Built Environment Conference. I had the privilege of leading the Hong Kong delegation to attend this important gathering of green building experts held in Melbourne and Helsinki in 2008 and 2011 respectively in my former capacity as the Secretary for Development. And I am extremely excited that this world conference will come to Hong Kong in 2017, when we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR. The tentative theme will be "Transforming our Built Environment through Innovation and Integration: Putting Ideas into Actions."

We look forward to showcasing how we can achieve low-carbon living alongside high-density development. Hong Kong already boasts one of the most energy-efficient transportation systems in the world. The challenge now is to make our buildings and built environment greener and more sustainable. And on this, we have made some initial success with Hong Kong's first Zero Carbon Building being honoured with the Energy Globe Award 2015, which is one of the world's most prestigious environmental awards.

I am pleased to see that Hang Seng Management College has taken a lead in this area. And I am sure this symposium will offer a profusion of innovative ideas, alongside the latest intelligence, on how best Hong Kong, and the Asian region as a whole, can move towards a greener, brighter, future for all of us.

I wish International Sustainability Week every success, and all of you here the very best of business. Sustainable business, of course.

Thank you very much.