

Speech of Head of Central Policy Unit at Conference on Social Enterprise

Financial Secretary, distinguished guests, friends from overseas, ladies and gentlemen.
Good morning.

First of all, I am very pleased to welcome you all to the Conference on Social Enterprise today jointly organised by the Commission on Poverty and the Central Policy Unit of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Social enterprise development can be viewed essentially as a subset of the wider Third Sector development. And I have always been fascinated by the strength of the Third Sector in driving innovations, social change and progress in our society.

Recognising the importance of the sector, the Central Policy Unit has, since 2002, conducted a number of studies on the development of the Third Sector in Hong Kong. We have also explored ways to promote tripartite partnerships among the public sector, private sector and the Third Sector in pursuing common social objectives.

To explore the potential of social enterprise development in Hong Kong, the Central Policy Unit has assisted the Commission on Poverty in commissioning two studies - one on our local experience and the other, on overseas experience from a comparative perspective - the preliminary findings of which will be shared with the audience of this Conference.

I hope the research findings can provide some solid basis to further our understanding of the nature, characteristics and success factors of social enterprises, as well as prompting reflections of where we want to go from here and how we wish to structure the future relationship among the business sector, academia, government and NGOs.

Today's conference would be a showcase of the potential of the Third Sector in using innovative solutions to bring about social change. Besides local speakers, we have also invited speakers from across the Atlantic as well as from our neighbours to share with us their first hand experience in promoting social enterprise development. I would also urge you to spend some time to visit the concurrent exhibition of some of the social enterprises now operating in Hong Kong.

Lastly, I am also very pleased to have such a rich mix of business, NGOs, policy makers, academics/researchers interested in the development of social enterprises today. It only serves to demonstrate the potential of social enterprise as a model for successful tripartite partnership - integrating the use of business expertise and solutions in delivering social goals.

Today's conference is the first of its kind and scale held in Hong Kong focusing on social enterprise development and its potentials in helping the disadvantaged in the community. I hope this is a good beginning in encouraging more informed discussion in the community on the subject, and in fostering fruitful partnerships in the future.

Last but not least, I also wish to thank the sponsors for their generous support of the conference. Their support showcases that corporate social responsibility is much alive in Hong Kong and adds to our confidence of why promoting social enterprise is a viable win-win pathway.

Thank you.