

Speech

Speech by SFST at CPA Australia Forum (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Professor K C Chan, at the CPA Australia Forum today (October 24):

Mr (Alex) Malley, Mr (Richard) Ho, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to open the CPA Australia forum today on "Public Accountability, Social Responsibility". Accountants and auditors play a central role in public accountability by maintaining a high quality of financial reporting available to shareholders, creditors and the investing public. In times of financial volatility which we are experiencing right now, accuracy and timeliness of financial information are ever more important.

It can be said that there are two aspects to "public accountability" of accountants, firstly professional competency which is technical competency expected of all accountants, including keeping up-to-date of the ever evolving international standards; and secondly, professional integrity, the maintenance of high standards of ethical behaviour through adoption of best practices and compliance with HKICPA's Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants.

The role of the 21st century accountants goes way beyond "public accountability" and what is required by laws and codes. Accountants as well as the companies they serve should also look at the bigger picture and consider taking up their "social responsibility" in respect of their Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR). The forum today provides an excellent platform for practitioners to share insights on the trends, technical aspects and best practices of CSR.

Ultimately, businesses that take CSR into account will stand to benefit in the long run, productivity may increase with better staff morale; shareholders and creditors' confidence may be boosted with better corporate image; and potential risks may be minimised with better internal control.

Last but not least, I would like to commend the long established efforts of the CPA Australia in grooming accounting talents in Hong Kong. The organisation, and the accountancy sector as a whole, have made valuable contribution to building Hong Kong into an international financial centre.

Thank you.