

Speech

Speech by SFST at opening ceremony of 59th World Statistics Congress of International Statistical Institute (English only)

Sunday, August 25, 2013

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Professor K C Chan, at the opening ceremony of the 59th World Statistics Congress of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) today (August 25):

Professor Lee (ISI President), Professor Nair (President-elect), Commissioner Ma (Commissioner of National Bureau of Statistics of China, Mr Ma Jiantang), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

It gives me great pleasure to join you all today at the opening ceremony of the 59th World Statistics Congress. Our sincere thanks to the International Statistical Institute for giving us the privilege of playing host to this prestigious biennial international event here in Hong Kong. This gathering gives us the opportunity to share the latest applications and developments in statistical science.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to Commissioner Ma of the National Bureau of Statistics of China for promoting the congress on the Mainland and for joining the opening ceremony this year. I would also like to congratulate the ISI on organising this event, where such a talented and diverse group of professionals from various fields of statistical science is brought together.

Statistics, and the statistics profession in particular, is becoming increasingly important in the operation and development of modern societies. This conference will highlight the crucial role played by statistics and the great contribution this science makes towards a wide range of socio-economic endeavours.

In today's exceedingly complex and multifaceted world, it is easy to stray and become lost in an ocean of details. Thanks to the hard work you perform as statistical practitioners, data are organised so that we can interpret large amounts of information coherently and succinctly.

The use of statistics is not limited to business applications. It is also the cornerstone of effective evidence-based decision-making at the international, regional

and community levels. Reliable and timely statistical data is indispensable to the Government in formulating policies and drawing up development plans. Once a policy is implemented, statistics is a useful tool for monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness.

Nor is the application of statistics limited to economic decision-making. Many important professions, including medicine, engineering, scientific research and drug development employ statistical tools in their daily operations and investigations. The proper use of statistics goes a long way towards improving our daily lives.

I am delighted to see that the depth and diversity of the Scientific Programme of the World Statistics Congress provides a line-up of distinguished speakers from around the world. This six-day conference offers a valuable chance for delegates to share their insights and experience in their respective streams of work. I believe that their views on a range of issues will help shape the future of the statistics profession, enabling it to meet the needs and aspirations of global and local communities.

This year, the congress has chosen "Youth" as the theme with a view to encouraging the participation of younger statisticians and to address, from various statistical perspectives, topics surrounding this important subject. This theme is timely indeed. In Hong Kong, statistics is taught as part of the secondary mathematics and liberal studies curriculum. As part of the course, certain subjects are analysed from economic and social perspectives, drawing on statistical indicators compiled by our Census and Statistics Department. Apart from promoting a better understanding of official statistics and proper statistical methods, our curriculum aims to raise awareness of the importance of statistics among the general public, and to encourage public participation in the government's statistical work.

To tie in with this theme, the Local Organising Committee has put in place a sponsorship programme for some 400 local university students who are studying statistics or related subjects to participate in this event. Six short courses have been arranged by the ISI and its associations in partnership with the University of Hong Kong.

I would like to finish on a lighter note by wishing you all a successful conference and a pleasant stay in our city, which has so much to offer. Hong Kong is a city where "East meets West", a legacy that is deeply rooted in our culture and communities. I understand that a set of Social Programmes have been arranged as part of the congress. Do take advantage of these programmes. I sincerely hope that

you will find time to enjoy the delights of Hong Kong - our splendid skyline, our scenic landscape and, of course, our shopping and culinary delights.

Thank you very much.

Ends