

## **Speech**

### **Opening remarks by Acting FS at opening ceremony of 28th Annual Conference of Asian Association of Open Universities (English only) (with photos)**

Tuesday, October 28, 2014

Following is the opening remarks by the Acting Financial Secretary, Professor K C Chan, at the opening ceremony of the 28th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities this afternoon (October 28):

Y S (Professor Wong Yuk-shan), Eddy (Dr Eddy C Fong), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

It gives me great pleasure to be here today to celebrate the opening of the 28th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities hosted by the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK). I want to extend a warm welcome to you all, especially to those of you who have travelled from afar to join this event today.

It is an honour for Hong Kong to host this prestigious conference, and I would like to congratulate OUHK and members of the organising committee for their commendable efforts. It will certainly pave the way for greater collaboration and co-operation among open and distance learning institutions in this region.

OUHK is the higher education institution in Hong Kong to offer open and distance learning programmes. OUHK's mission is to make higher education accessible to all who want it, regardless of qualifications, gender or race.

I understand that OUHK serves 12 000 distance learning students and 7 000 full-time post-secondary students, enrolled in some 300 academic streams at different levels. Since its establishment in 1989 as the Open Learning Institute, OUHK has produced over 70 000 graduates. Last year alone, 5 700 students graduated. This is a very impressive number.

For many, an OUHK education is an important turning point in their lives. Many graduates have inspiring success stories that epitomise the Hong Kong spirit.

The theme of this year's Conference is timely. We live in a globalised world where knowledge is an added strength that will enable individuals to contribute to the betterment of their communities.

Better, widely available communications and information technology not only pushes the globalisation of economies, but also changes the way education is delivered. Students can now learn through self-paced or real-time online courses. They collaborate on projects online and interact with instructors during virtual office hours. Even in traditional classrooms, teachers now use modern communications technology in their lectures, assignments and student interactions.

As a globalised city and a regional education hub, Hong Kong is one of the ideal locations to develop open and distance learning. Hong Kong ranks second in the McKinsey Global Institute's new global Connectedness Index, which surveyed 131 economies.

We believe that open and distance learning is playing a vital role by opening up valuable avenues to quality education to enable people to advance in their careers by upgrading their qualifications, and even for personal fulfilment and enhancement. The beauty of this mode of education is that it is available to anyone, anywhere, at an affordable price.

In closing, I would like to congratulate OUHK, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. I wish you all a productive conference, and I hope that you will find some time to enjoy some of the attractions of Asia's world city. Thank you.

Ends

