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Executive Director's Statement

The theme of this year's annual report is *Navigating the Future Together*. The title reflects how, despite the continued impact of COVID-19 on the global tourism industry, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) rose to the challenges in 2021/22, launching a raft of innovative initiatives together with the travel trade to generate a positive ambience while creating new business opportunities for tourism and related sectors. The HKTb has also successfully revived some of its iconic mega events in imaginative ways to showcase Hong Kong's vibrancy and dynamics to the world.

With travel still restricted by the pandemic, the HKTb adjusted its focus to first generate a positive ambience and encourage residents to be tourists in our own city, discovering unexpected delights and gaining a richer understanding of Hong Kong.

The HKTb extended the popular *Holiday at Home* promotions and launched Spend-to-Redeem "Free Tours" and "Staycation Delights" promotions with increased

quotas, together with a "Free Tours Lucky Draw", which encouraged and rewarded citizens for getting vaccinated. These promotions proved popular with members of the public and the travel trade alike and quotas were filled within days or even hours of the tours/ events being launched. In light of the promotions, the travel trade also created new routes and experiences as they warm up to the return of Mainland and overseas visitors.

Meanwhile, capitalising on the development of a cluster of new world-class arts venues in the West Kowloon Cultural District, the HKTb launched a "Hong Kong Neighbourhood – West Kowloon" promotion, inviting the public to explore the area's cultural highlights. The promotion also guided the public through unexplored streets and lanes to discover fascinating attractions and authentic local experiences, encouraging local to share by word of mouth to their friends and friends outside Hong Kong.

The HKTb also gradually resumed a number of signature events in physical format, premising on safeguarding public health and safety, including the "Hong Kong Wine & Dine Festival", "Hong Kong WinterFest", and the "New Year Countdown Celebrations". The revived events adopted novel approaches and elements to capture the world's attention and maintain Hong Kong's exposure in visitor source markets.

The New Year Countdown Celebrations, for instance, were held for the first time with an outdoor countdown concert at the Arts Park in the West Kowloon Cultural District, along with an enhanced version of *A Symphony of Lights* and a countdown clock on the giant M+ façade next to Victoria Harbour. The event attracted more than 100 media outlets from Hong Kong, the Mainland, and overseas, including CCTV, CNN, and BBC, reaching a worldwide audience of 2.4 billion people.

The series of mega events and promotions not only attracted the attention of the worldwide audiences but also won the HKTb recognition from global and local markets. For instance, *Holiday at Home* won four major awards, including a Bronze Award in the HKMA/Viu TV Awards for Marketing Excellence and Excellence in Agility and Crisis Management. Similarly, "Hong Kong Neighbourhood – West Kowloon" also won 14 awards, including the Grand Award in Marketing in the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Awards 2022.

Mega events aside, the HKTb made use of diverse promotional channels to keep Hong Kong on the minds of international travellers. It signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding with Asia's leading entertainment company CJ ENM to arrange for Korean dramas and variety shows to be filmed in Hong Kong when travel resumes, attracting Korean showbiz fans to the city. The HKTb also extended the "360 Hong Kong Moments" promotional series and developed a series of 360-degree and ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) videos featuring Hong Kong's great outdoors to immerse viewers in the territory's stunning scenery. In addition, the HKTb partnered with a selection of internationally-renowned media organisations to produce and broadcast travel documentaries and reality shows about Hong Kong. These initiatives shared one goal – to maintain Hong Kong's profile with global visitors as a vibrant and action-packed destination.

Meanwhile, the HKTb maintained close ties with the global travel trade, organising and participating in online and offline trade shows and conferences in Hong Kong, the Mainland and overseas to provide support and partnership opportunities to the trade.

The HKTb continued its work in the fight against the pandemic. In 2021/22, the HKTb extended the fee waivers to eligible trade partners to participate in the "Anti-Epidemic Hygiene Measures Certification Scheme". Around 3,000 outlets and venues have been certified so far. For the cruise sector, we also stepped up publicity on cruise safety and hygiene standards to rebuild the confidence of visitors and members of the public.

Looking ahead, as the pandemic brought along a new normal, the HKTb is constantly reviewing the latest market updates and Hong Kong's tourism brand and positioning, with a series of research conducted. We will timely launch the new tourism brand to tell the Hong Kong good stories and drive the full revival of the tourism industry according to the actual pace of cross-boundary / border travel.

As we prepare for the new global tourism landscape, the HKTb will uphold Hong Kong's international profile through a broad array of promotional programmes. I would like to thank the Government, the tourism and related sectors, our trade partners, sponsors, and members of the public for their trust and support in our work, as well as our board members for their guidance and advice. I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Hong Kong Head Office and our elite teams at the 22 worldwide and representative offices for their hard work and dedication in achieving success for our events and promotions despite the challenges under the epidemic.

The door to Hong Kong's international connectivity is gradually opening up. The HKTb's work plan to revive the tourism industry is ready to launch, and we will continue to closely monitor the response of source markets to inbound control measures and the pace of flight resumption in order to roll out our initiatives for reviving the industry in a timely manner. I am convinced that Hong Kong tourism is rich in opportunity, and we have every reason to be optimistic and full of expectation as we move forward together into a bright new future for our tourism industry.