

## **Speech by H/GLTMS at ISAHK International Conference 2016**

President Wong, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is my honor to be giving the opening speech for the first ISAHK International Conference. I wish to congratulate ISA Hong Kong Chapter for their efforts. I am impressed at the lineup of distinguished speakers sharing their latest findings and experiences, and I believe the participants will greatly benefit from this Conference.

### **Sustainable Urban Forestry Strategy**

Hong Kong is a dense and compact city. With our growing population and public aspiration in creating a more liveable and resilient city, there is a need for us to look at more progressive ways to collaborate and embed robust urban forestry principles into urban design and development projects. This includes urban arboriculture; urban ecology and landscape architecture.

While natural forests and vegetation in our country parks cover a very large part of Hong Kong, there is an exciting opportunity to create and extend those forests into our city – to create urban forests.

I'm sure you know better than me that creating resilient urban forests is not an easy task. We need to carefully balance the life-cycle of urban trees and other vegetation with our compact but dense city form. Our ancestors planted many of the trees you now see in full maturity around Hong Kong. However, not all locations will be suitable to plant trees and the lifespan of species will vary depending on a variety of urban environmental factors associated with growing in a city environment. Trees in the city will have a shorter life-cycle to trees in a natural setting

My Section: the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (GLTMS) in the Development Bureau is formulating an urban forestry strategy to provide a strategic framework for sustainable long-term management of our urban vegetation in a holistic manner. Such strategy aims to maximise vegetation diversity of complementary species mix per m<sup>2</sup> from trees, shrubs to herbaceous plants, and to showcase our local species in our urban landscapes.

As an example, the Highways Department has embraced this holistic approach to urban forestry in their replacement planting programme of our aging *Acacia confusa* trees with native vegetation. This programme will provide important reference for similar future programmes in Hong Kong.

We are continuing our advocacy of “Right Tree, Right Place” through developing the concepts of lifecycle planning and life expectancy for our urban trees. We are also working towards a more holistic approach to managing our stonewall trees and improve the current risk management strategy to assess risk quantitatively and set priorities to identify and handle trees with the highest risks.

## **Positive Capacity Building**

Our aspirations for a sustainable urban landscape need your support. We need to promote knowledge building and sharing amongst the public and private sectors: to positively build capacity and raise the overall professional standards in the arboriculture and horticultural industries.

The GLTMS has unveiled a number of positive capacity building initiatives with and for – the arboricultural and horticultural industries. The purpose is two-fold: to align education and practice of the industries; and to raise the professional standing of the industries to promote quality performance and career prospects of practitioners. These initiatives were the outcomes of months of active discussions between government and industry stakeholders including professional bodies, industry associations, trade unions, landscape contractors and training institution as well as consultation with EPTM members.

With the support of the Education Bureau, an Industry Training Advisory Committee (ITAC) was established in early October 2016 as part of their Qualifications Framework system. It is a regulatory framework that will recognise your professional standing, along with a clear understanding on the knowledge, skills and experience to discharge your duties in a safe, professional and proficient manner. This will not only uphold quality standards and encourage continuous professional development, but also contribute to the sustainable development of the industry. The key message: “we stand as one for our collective future”.

In closing, I once again congratulate the ISA Hong Kong Chapter for this Conference. To all of you: enjoy this conference. Ask a lot questions. Be part of our journey. Be part of the change. Thank you.

**October 2016**

**Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section**