

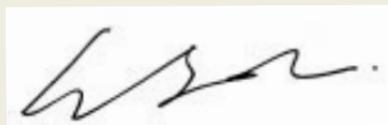
Foreword

In these few years, we have witnessed tremendous changes in the tourism industry of Macao. The liberalisation of Macao's gaming business has accelerated the development of our tourism industry. The gaming industry is expected to spur the establishment of different types and styles of hotels, large-scale convention and exhibition facilities, brand new theme parks, and the occurrence of various big events in tourism, sport and culture. All these will help to unleash the charm and vitality of the City.

2005 is a year we, as a Chinese and Macao resident, should be proud of. The year has marked a new stage in our development since "The Historic Centre of Macao" was successfully inscribed in the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage List, becoming the 31st World Heritage in the nation. The East and West have met and merged for centuries in an atmosphere marked by mutual respect and tolerance, facilitating a unique form of cultural assimilation. The inscription not only brings the City fame and international recognition but also unprecedented opportunities to the development of cultural tourism. Integrated within a historically vibrant environment, the "Historic Centre of Macao" still has a clearly identifiable character and remains a fertile ground for cultural exchange, in the form of tangible architecture, as well as intangible aspects of life such as religions and social lifestyles. It is believed that there will be an upsurge of tourist arrivals because of the inscription and that more supporting facilities will be developed to provide an unforgettable experience to visitors.

In addition, tourism development is a significant component of the Pan-Pearl River Delta (PPRD) Co-operation Framework Agreement. Competition and monopolistic development of tourism resources are giving way to cooperation amongst regions that encourages sharing of resources to reach mutual benefits. Thus, the inscription of "The Historic Centre of Macao" adds to the competitive advantage not only to Macao but also to the PPRD region.

With our tourism resources and development opportunities, Macao has certain advantages in boosting tourist arrivals and average spending. Hence, there is also a pressing need for human resources. Sustainable tourism development rests in a solid foundation of professional training and education. I believe IFT will extend its expertise to devote to the healthy development of the community, and effectively utilise its resources to fortify tourism education and training, in terms of both quality and quantity. I urge that IFT keep pace with the rapid development of the industry and the society at large.



Chui Sai On
Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture