

For immediate release

Asian Licensing Conference Gathers Global Experts *New Trends and Opportunities Help to Drive Industry Forward*

8 January 2019 – Organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC), the eighth edition of the **Asian Licensing Conference** kicked off yesterday (7 Jan) and runs for two days at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC). The two plenary sessions on the first day of the event focused on the fast-growing Asia and Mainland China markets

Rapid Growth in Licensing Drives Industry Forward

Addressing the opening ceremony of the conference were **Margaret Fong**, HKTDC Executive Director; **Matthew Cheung**, Chief Secretary for Administration of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, and **Cai Jiacheng**, Associate Inspector of the Department of Cultural and Tourism Industries, Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China.

Ms Fong said the shifting economics of global manufacturing have created challenges for industry players, with issues such as increasing protectionism and the transition to e-tailing leading many businesses to begin exploring licensing opportunities in a bid to move up the value chain.

“The licensing industry has been showing an upward trend,” said Ms Fong, adding that global sales of licensed products reached US\$271 billion in 2017, an increase of 3.3% on the previous year. “The regional story was impressive, with sales growing by 5.8% to US\$31.6 billion and accounting for 11.6% of the world total,” she noted. The Mainland China market showed an increase of 10.3%, topping the world growth chart and continuing to be a significant driver of the global licensing industry.

New Market Trends in Asian Licensing Industry

At the first plenary session yesterday – “Asia: Gold Mine in Licensing” – speakers uncovered the latest market trends in Asia, analysing the key issues and sharing their successful formulas for tapping into the Asian market.

Vikram Sharma, Vice President, Cartoon Network Enterprises, Turner International Asia Pacific Ltd, said that lifestyles in Asia are becoming increasingly digital and widespread use of social media is creating strong licensing opportunities in emerging markets. Messaging apps are very popular among Asia consumers, enabling e-commerce stores to sell to them directly. “Asia is the land of stories where characters have built strong emotional connections and bonding with regional consumers. Moreover, character properties can go beyond licensed consumer products into other sectors, such as licensed location-based entertainments, cafes and exhibitions,” Mr Sharma noted.

Speaking at the same session, **Miki Yamamoto**, Senior Vice President, Licensing, Asia, IMG, said “To introduce American brands into Asian markets and make them sustainable, we have to continually modify and upgrade the brands in addition to creating their brand values.” She explained that the Rugby World Cup 2019 is a good example of giving Asian characteristics to an international brand, with the event creating its first-ever mascot for host

country Japan. “We are also working with the 12 [Rugby World Cup] host cities to launch a range of local-only licensed products, such as kimonos,” she explained.

Exploring New Opportunities through Partnerships

“It is very important to work with licensors in different markets who understand your needs and have long-term strategies. We have created numerous Smiley style guides for different markets where we have a network of agents promoting our brand,” said **Nicolas Loufrani**, CEO, Smiley World Ltd, addressing delegates at the first plenary session.

Mr Loufrani added that the company has been working with apparel and jewellery chain stores, from luxury, high-end outlets to mass-market retailers, and the Smiley footprint can now be found in shopping malls and department stores, and even gift shop chains. He explained that Smiley World has developed licensed products to tap into specific market segments.

Another speaker, **Andrew Carley**, EVP Global Licensing, Entertainment One, said that the key to a successful licensing business is to strike the right balance between implementing a local approach and maintaining the brand’s value to create a sustainable licensing programme. Mr Carley said that local partners can help brands to understand local relationships and local retailers, and can offer strong support in the local market. “The watchwords are to adapt, manage expectations and stay true to the brand’s core values,” he said.

Yesterday afternoon’s thematic session focused on the fast-growing world of esports. **Kenneth Fok**, President of the Asian Electronic Sports Federation delivered the opening remarks, saying that the HKSAR Government invested HK\$100 million in 2018 to promote esports, highlighting the huge potential for development in the industry. Mr Fok added that esports were featured as a demonstration sport at the 2018 Asian Games, with many of the contestants coming from Hong Kong.

Jai Wu, Head of LPL Merchandise & Licensing, Riot Games China, was joined by **Eric Jou**, APAC Business Development and Partnerships, ESL Gaming, to share the latest esports developments in Asia and discuss the immense opportunities arising from the broader application of licences and intellectual properties (IPs) for esports games and leagues.

Rounding off the conference was a workshop covering the “Legal and Intellectual Property Issues of Licensing”, at which legal professionals and experts with rich experience in the Asian market, and Mainland China in particular, shared the IP-protection and contractual issues faced in handling the growing number of entertainment, content and digital IPs, using real-case illustrations.

The Asian Licensing Conference runs concurrently with the HKTDC Hong Kong International Licensing Show, HKTDC Hong Kong Toys & Games Fair, HKTDC Hong Kong Baby Products Fair and Hong Kong International Stationery Fair at the HKCEC this week, creating synergy and more cross-sector business opportunities for global buyers.

Asian Licensing Conference website: www.hktdc.com/fair/alc-en

Hong Kong International Licensing Show website: www.hktdc.com/fair/hklicensingshow-en

Photo download: <https://bit.ly/2sgNlXo>

	<p>The eighth edition of the Asian Licensing Conference (7-8 Jan) gathers some 30 global licensing experts to explore industry opportunities and challenges. Speaking at the conference opening ceremony yesterday are (from top) Margaret Fong, Executive Director, Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC); Matthew Cheung, Chief Secretary for Administration of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR); and Cai Jiacheng, Associate Inspector of the Department of Cultural and Tourism Industries, Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China</p>
	<p>Miki Yamamoto, Senior Vice President, Licensing, Asia, IMG</p>
	<p>Vikram Sharma, Vice President, Cartoon Network Enterprises, Turner International Asia Pacific Ltd</p>
	<p>Andrew Carley, EVP Global Licensing, Entertainment One</p>

	<p>Nicolas Loufrani, CEO, Smiley World Ltd</p>
	<p>The Asian Licensing Conference kicked off yesterday (7 Jan) at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre and concludes today</p>

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About the HKTDC

Established in 1966, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) is a statutory body dedicated to creating opportunities for Hong Kong's businesses. With 50 [offices](#) globally, including 13 in Mainland China, the HKTDC promotes Hong Kong as a platform for doing business with the mainland, Asia and the world. With more than 50 years of experience, the HKTDC organises [international exhibitions, conferences](#) and [business missions](#) to provide companies, particularly SMEs, with business opportunities in the mainland and international markets, while providing business insights and information via [trade publications](#), [research reports](#) and [digital channels](#) including the [media room](#). For more information, please visit: www.hktdc.com/aboutus. Follow us on  Twitter @hktdc  LinkedIn