

## **Launch Ceremony of SFC Investor Education 2006**

### **Key Points of the Welcome Remarks**

**By Martin Wheatley  
Chairman  
Securities and Futures Commission  
Hong Kong  
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Mr Frederick Ma,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- We are honoured to have your presence today to witness the launch of our investor education programmes for the year of 2006. We are particularly grateful to our guest of honour, Mr Frederick Ma, who is always supportive of our investor education work.
- One of the SFC's statutory objectives is to promote investor education to help investors protect their interests. We believe that, to maintain Hong Kong's position as an international financial centre, our regulatory landscape must be on a par with international standards. One of the key aspects is investor protection. I am delighted to learn from the World Bank's report on "Doing Business in 2006" that Hong Kong gets the third highest score among the 145 jurisdictions included in the "Investor Protection Index".
- As investor education is key to investor protection, we set up a dedicated in-house team to launch various investor education programmes in April 1996. This department will soon be celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Apart from internal efforts, we also formed a statutory Investor Education Advisory Committee, with members from different constituents to assist us. We are indebted to the valuable advice and support of our Committee members. Indeed, some of the Committee's past and present members are here with us today.
- With a view to strengthening the impact of our investor education messages to the public, we shall set a theme each year and deliver focused messages along that theme. The theme for 2006 is: "Before you invest, ask the right questions." Investors are encouraged to ask the right questions to learn all that they can about an investment product or service before they invest or take up an investment adviser's recommendation. This is crucial in helping investors safeguard their interests and make informed choices.
- We have recently conducted a survey of levels of financial understanding. Whilst we are still analysing the results – these will be published later this quarter – one or two findings come out very strongly. There remains a worrying level of ignorance around investment products. Many people surveyed could not achieve even 50% on a range of simple financial questions.

But there is also some evidence that our efforts are paying off – those aware of SFC’s education role consistently scored higher than those who were not. However, there is still more to be done. It is important for all parties – regulators, market operators, investment advisers, brokers and educators – to play a role in increasing the knowledge of our retail investors. And those investors need to take responsibility for researching and understanding the investment vehicles they choose. We will do our part as indicated in today’s ceremony.

- The passing of one year to another is always a time for resolutions. Many people plan or re-position their investments in January. To raise public awareness of the importance of investor education and to provide timely education messages, we have named January the Investor Education Month. Today’s launch ceremony marks the start of a variety of investor education initiatives that we have planned for 2006. For instance, there will be new public interest TV and radio commercials, competitions, flash animation videos, newspaper columns, radio dramas, TV documentary-dramas, investor forums and university courses, to name just a few.
- As you are probably aware, to serve our investors round-the-clock, we operate a dedicated investor education portal, the Electronic Investor Resources Centre (abbreviated as eIRC). The eIRC is an online repository for our investor education materials. Starting today, this portal will have a new name – InvestEd – spelt “I-n-v-e-s-t-e-d”, a short form for Investor Education. We believe this name will be easier to remember. When investors need generic advice about SFC-regulated investment activities, they just have to type [www.InvestEd.hk](http://www.InvestEd.hk) and will immediately be linked to the information. We hope more and more investors would take advantage of this website.
- Last but not least, to help the general public instantly recognise our investor education activities, we have created an investor education icon, which will be unveiled at the ceremony later.
- Finally, may I take this opportunity to say a few words to our media friends present today. The media are our important partners when it comes to investor education. Disseminating our investor education messages through the print, TV and radio media is highly effective. We shall continue to count on your support and look forward to working more closely with you in our investor education work.