

25th Anniversary Reception in Vienna
(7 June 2022)

Welcome Remarks by DBL

Ambassador Li (Xiaosi), Ambassador Wang (Qun), Ms Winsome Chan,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening. It is my privilege and great pleasure to welcome you all to our reception to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. This is an important milestone for our city as we set to surge towards a brighter future. Since the return of sovereignty to our Motherland on 1 July 1997, the principle of “One Country, Two Systems” has been the foundation of our governance, upholding our unique strengths and sustaining our success.

2. The 25th Anniversary’s theme of “A New Era – Stability, Prosperity and Opportunity” not only represents Hong Kong’s exemplary achievements over the past 25 years, but also underscores our eager anticipation for and confidence in a brighter future. Our Office is celebrating this special occasion by hosting and participating in a series of events ranging from exhibition, gala dinners, dragon boat races, street food festival to film festivals. This reception is our first large-scale gathering in celebration of the 25th Anniversary, and in fact the first physical gathering of this nature since the pandemic. I feel honoured to share the joy with you in the beautiful city of Vienna.

3. Hong Kong and Austria share close economic ties underpinned by strong trade figures. After a drop due to the economic effects of the global pandemic, our bilateral merchandise trade improved by more than 44% in 2021 compared to 2020. As we have our friend from the Hong Kong Trade Development Council with us today, perhaps I will leave it to Winsome to update you on this front.

4. So, business aside, Hong Kong and Austria, in particular Vienna, share our interest in another aspect – the development of arts and culture. As an East-meets-West hub for international arts and cultural exchanges, Hong Kong dedicates a key part of its budget to the development of its arts and culture. In 2022-23 alone, for instance, we will be allocating some EUR 5 million for organising the Hong Kong Performing Arts Market, and another EUR 10 million for the development of the East Kowloon Cultural Centre which is expected to be commissioned next year. And let's not forget about our West Kowloon Cultural District, one of the world's largest cultural projects which houses the internationally acclaimed visual arts museum M+, and also the Hong Kong Palace Museum which is set to open next month. As Hong Kong strives to become a hub for arts and cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world under the 14th National Five-Year Plan, one can foresee that there will only be more and more cultural exchange and cooperation opportunities between Hong Kong and Austria.

5. Talking about people-to-people-exchange, I wish to highlight some good news, which some of you might already be aware of. Starting from this April, the hotel quarantine period for travellers entering Hong Kong has already been substantially shortened to seven days. And from last month onwards, non-Hong Kong residents who are fully vaccinated are able to enter Hong Kong again after more than two years. We very much look forward to welcoming you all in Hong Kong!

6. This brings me to the next important update about Hong Kong that one cannot miss. On 8 May, Mr John Lee was elected as the sixth-term Chief Executive, succeeding the incumbent Chief Executive Mrs Carrie Lam from 1 July. Under his leadership, we will continue to capitalise on Hong Kong's unique advantages under "One Country, Two Systems", enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness and pursue a sustainable development through strengthening our role as a gateway between the world and Mainland China.

7. I am glad that our friends from the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and InvestHK are here with us tonight, so please feel free to approach them to learn more about the business opportunities between Hong Kong and Austria.

8. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you once again for joining us tonight on this special occasion. It's really been a while since we last get together. To make tonight a little bit more memorable for you, we are delighted to present you with classical music performed by young talents from Hong Kong, after which delicious Chinese food will be served.

9. Please enjoy the evening!

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