

**25th Anniversary Gala Dinner in Berlin**  
**(17 June 2022)**

**Welcome Remarks by DBL**

Ambassador Wu (Ken), Mr Silas Chu, 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 with the unwavering support of the Central People's Government. 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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, dragon boat races, street food festival, film festivals to, last but not least, gala dinners like tonight's. I am truly honoured to share the joy with you all here in Berlin, Germany, which is also the home base of our Office.

3. Germany is Hong Kong largest trading partner in the EU, and the two places have long shared close economic ties over the past years. Amidst the global pandemic, our bilateral merchandise trade managed to improve by about 19% 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 Silas to update you more on this front.]

4. Hong Kong and Germany, in particular Berlin, share our interest in another important aspect – the development of a thriving start-up scene. With its deep talent pool, world-class R&D capabilities, ample funding opportunities and an increasingly supportive ecosystem, Hong Kong has much to offer to international entrepreneurs and start-ups that wish to launch their business in the centre of Asia. We are happy to see that the number of start-ups in Hong Kong has increased remarkably in recent years, to 3 700 in 2021, a 68% increase from just four years ago. As Hong Kong strives to become an international innovation and technology hub under the National 14th Five-Year Plan, we can foresee that there will only be more and more exchanges and cooperation opportunities between Hong Kong and Germany.

5. For those who are interested in doing businesses in Hong Kong, I sincerely invite you to visit Hong Kong for yourself, to discover the vast opportunities that are available for international investors, entrepreneurs and global talents. In this connection, I wish to share some good news with you, which I am sure some of you are already be aware of. Starting from April this year, 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! 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 Germany.

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 new Chief Executive, who will be succeeding the incumbent Chief Executive Mrs Carrie Lam next month on 1 July. Under his able leadership and with the support of the Central Government, we are confident that Hong Kong will scale new heights by capitalising on Hong Kong's unique advantages under "One Country, Two Systems", and strengthening our role as a gateway between China and the rest of the world.

7. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you once again for joining us tonight on this special occasion. It has 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 a classical music performance by four young talents from Hong Kong.

8. Please enjoy the evening!

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