

25th Anniversary Reception in Geneva
(30 June 2022)

Welcome Remarks by DBL

Mr Laurie Lo, Excellencies, 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 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 one of our large-scale gatherings in celebration of the 25th Anniversary. I feel honoured to share the joy with you in the beautiful city of Geneva in Switzerland.

3. As mentioned by Laurie just now, Hong Kong's economic outlook remains positive despite the pandemic. Apart from promising trade figures, our economy has recovered remarkably well in 2021 with an overall growth of 6.4%, while investment expenditure even rose by 10.1%. For 2022, notwithstanding the disruption caused by the Omicron wave in the past few months and worsened global economic prospects, we are still forecasting that Hong Kong's economy will stay resilient and achieve growth of 1 to 2% in real terms for the year as a whole. Meanwhile, business confidence in Hong Kong remains strong, as evident from the fact that Hong Kong remains at the top among various international rankings.

4. Hong Kong and Switzerland has long shared close economic ties. As Hong Kong continues to consolidate our role as an international financial and trading centre under the National 14th Five-Year Plan, we can foresee that there will only be more and more business exchange and cooperation opportunities between Hong Kong and Switzerland.

5. Business aside, Hong Kong and Switzerland share our interest in another aspect – the development of arts and culture. As an East-meets-West hub for international arts and cultural exchanges, there is always a lot going on in Hong Kong. One key highlight is of course the Art Basel that was successfully held in Hong Kong last month. Another exciting news is the opening of the Hong Kong Palace Museum on 2 July (this Saturday), which is set to become an icon of the West Kowloon Cultural District, one of the world’s largest cultural projects. 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 Switzerland.

6. 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!

7. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you once again for joining us tonight on this special occasion. Please enjoy the evening!

– Ends –

(~ 600 words; 3 minutes)