

## **CNY Reception in Bratislava (18 March 2026)**

### **Welcome Remarks by DBL**

Ambassador CAI, Mr MIHÓK, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon! It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to our Chinese New Year reception. This is my first time joining this annual event, and I am delighted to celebrating the Year of the Horse in Bratislava.

2. In Chinese culture, horse is a symbol of vitality, strength, and perseverance. This year is particularly special as it is the Year of the “Fire Horse”, which occurs once every sixty years and symbolises a time of great momentum and breakthroughs.

3. The past year has not been without challenges. Global tensions and lingering trade barriers have created uncertainty across economies. Yet, I am proud to share that Hong Kong has shown remarkable resilience.

4. In 2025, Hong Kong’s economy grew by a robust 3.5%. Our stock market returned as the world’s leading IPO fundraising hub, raising more than EUR 30 billion (HK\$285.8 billion) from over 110 new listings, a testament to the strength of our financial sector and investor confidence. A record-high number of 11 000 foreign and Chinese Mainland companies were located in Hong Kong in 2025, 11 per cent more than the year before. Building on this success, I am confident that Hong Kong will continue to advance with vitality and strength in the year ahead.

5. Hong Kong's roles as "Super Connector" and "Super Value-Adder" are becoming increasingly important in a changing global landscape. Hong Kong's common law system, free flow of capital, and simple and low tax regime, make us an indispensable hub for global trade and finance. As a Special Administrative Region of China, Hong Kong stands at the intersection and serves as the bridge — connecting China with the world, and the world with China. We facilitate the dual flow of trade and investment, bringing companies from Europe to Hong Kong and the greater China and Asia markets on one hand, and helping Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong enterprises to "Go Global" as a launchpad.

6. Looking ahead, I would like to highlight three significant opportunities for enhanced cooperation between Hong Kong and Slovakia.

7. **First, innovation and technology.** Last September, my office together with a delegation from Hong Kong in the innovation and technology sector, participated in the SlovakiaTech Forum held in Košice, Slovakia. I am impressed that Slovakia has made significant strides in recent years in strengthening promoting I&T developments, which align closely with Hong Kong's strengths and lay fertile ground for deeper collaboration between our two economies. In fact, Hong Kong is investing heavily in innovation and technology, from artificial intelligence and life sciences to green tech and fintech. Hong Kong is also the only city in the world to host five universities in the top 100, and our research and innovation capabilities are expanding rapidly. Whether in R&D, talent exchange, start-up development, or investment, Hong Kong stands ready to connect and grow with you.

8.           **Second, financial services and capital markets.** Hong Kong’s capital markets can provide Slovak companies with access to Asian investors, while Slovak investors can leverage Hong Kong as a base to explore opportunities in Chinese Mainland as well as other ASEAN countries. Family offices and cross-border wealth management and asset allocation will remain areas of strong growth. On trade and supply chain resilience, in a changing global landscape, businesses seek reliable partners and diversified networks. Hong Kong’s free port status, world-class logistics infrastructure, and strong legal framework make us a trusted partner for international trade. Our connectivity—by air, sea, and digital networks—links Europe efficiently with Asian markets.

9.           **Third, people-to-people exchanges.** Hong Kong has always been a unique place where East meets West, which is renowned for its vibrant multicultural scene. Students and scholars from around the world have been choosing Hong Kong as their academic home, with around one out of five of our students come outside Hong Kong. Under the “Study in HK” initiative, we are committed to developing Hong Kong into an international education hub for high-calibre talents to pursue further studies and career development. International students and talents can expect excellent higher education, internationally recognised qualifications, and enormous employment opportunities.

10.          Last but not least, we see that a Comprehensive Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement (CDTA) could be conducive to bilateral trade activities, bringing substantial mutual benefits. We hope to have the support of Slovak business community, so that the negotiations on a CDTA can commence as soon as practicable to create a more favourable and attractive business environment for investors to establish or expand their businesses.

11. So let us make today an opportunity to reach out, exchange ideas, and build new friendships. May the Year of the Horse brings us prosperity, stability and many more opportunities to collaborate. Thank you.

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