

## **CNY Reception in Berlin**

**(13 February 2024)**

### **Welcome Remarks by DBL**

Dear Envoy ZENG, Rainer, Silas, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening. It is a great pleasure to have all of you joining us here tonight to celebrate the Chinese New Year in Berlin.

2. This year, we are turning the page to unveil the majestic Year of the Dragon, which is undoubtedly one of the most anticipated zodiacs of the Chinese calendar. I'm sure you can all imagine why – the Dragon is associated with strength, courage, affluence and resilience, and has always been considered the most important symbol of divine and power in the Chinese tradition. And here are two fun facts about the Year of the Dragon for you. Did you know that Dragon is the only Chinese zodiac sign that does not correspond to a real animal? Yes, all the other 11 signs are actual animals, from Rat to Pig. And the second fun fact, did you know that there is often a spike in birth rates in Asian communities during Dragon years? Yes, many people are convinced that babies born in the Year of the Dragon are destined for greatness, so in fact a lot of people in Hong Kong are very eager to have Dragon babies. So if you're planning to have kids, perhaps now is a good time to get busy!

3. Fun things aside, I am hopeful that the coming year will be filled with prosperity and success as the Dragon promises. For Hong Kong, we are eager to embrace the courage and power of the Dragon and start off our year with strong determination. We are forecasting a positive outlook on our

economic development, with a GDP growth of 4.1% and near full employment in the third quarter of 2023.

4. Hong Kong's connectivity with the outside world is also returning. Our world-class airport, which connects to more than 220 destinations with more than 1 000 daily flights before the pandemic, has already recovered to about 80% of capacity and will reach full recovery this year. Tourist numbers are also gradually coming back, with number of visitors having reached 3 to 4 million per month in the past few months.

5. Apart from boosting tourism, we are also continuing our endeavour to attract enterprises and talents to Hong Kong to further drive our economic growth. Since its establishment about one year ago, the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises has approached nearly 300 enterprises, with 30 of them already planning to set up businesses or increase their business scale in Hong Kong. This will involve an investment of a total of more than HKD 30 billion and creation of about 10 000 jobs in the coming few years.

6. On talent attraction, we have launched the Top Talent Pass Scheme and made amendments to some admission schemes for different types of professionals. As a result, we received over 180 000 applications last year, among which 110 000 had been approved and 70 000 people had already arrived in Hong Kong.

7. But you must not forget, that Hong Kong is not just a place for business, but also a great place for lifestyle and leisure. As a cosmopolitan city in Asia, we spare no effort to develop Hong Kong into an international arts and cultural exchange hub. Our Government will, for instance, set up a dedicated Cultural and Creative Industries Development Agency to promote the relevant sectors' development under an industry-oriented approach. We will also be publishing the first-ever comprehensive blueprint on Hong Kong's arts and culture and creative industries development later this year. Before all that, I sincerely invite you all to visit our West Kowloon Cultural District, where the

world-class M+ and Hong Kong Palace Museum are located. I have personally visited the two museums just two months ago, and my mind was blown away.

8. On this cultural note, I can think of no better way to present Hong Kong's arts and culture to you than to let you experience a live musical performance by a very gifted and renowned pianist from Hong Kong. Thank you once again for joining us today. May the Dragon infuse our future endeavours with passion and determination, lighting the way to a year filled with adventure and success. I wish all of you a happy, prosperous and blessed Year of the Dragon! Please enjoy the evening!

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