

Speech by SJ at opening ceremony of AUIAC 2004

Following is a speech by the Secretary for Justice, Ms Elsie Leung, at the opening ceremony of the Australian Universities International Alumni Convention 2004 today (December 2):

Chairlady Ms Lelia Ho, Ms Fiona Buffinton, Vice Minister Mr Zhang Xinsheng, the Hon Pehin Sri Taib Mahmud, the Hon Bob Hawke, the Hon Consul-General, Distinguished Delegates and Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege for me to join you at this Opening Ceremony of the Australian Universities International Alumni Convention (AUIAC) 2004 hosted by the Federation of Australian Alumni Associations Hong Kong.

On behalf of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, I would like to extend our warmest welcome to all of the delegates to this convention.

Since its inception in 1998, AUIAC has become a premier biennial event for alumni of Australian universities to renew their friendships and to network with each other. I am pleased that Hong Kong, which is home to some 100,000 Australian alumni, is given the chance to host this convention.

I would say that you have made an excellent choice this year. Despite our different cultures and ways of life, Australia and Hong Kong do share many of the core values on which our success is built. Both Australia and Hong Kong have a free, open and tolerant society. We are both firmly committed to maintaining the rule of law, a level playing field, an open and clean government, free enterprises and market competition, and protection of individual freedom and human rights. All these values remain very much alive in the governance of both societies and serve as pillars to our continued success.

I last visited Australia in 2002 and might have even met some of you in the audience today during the trip. On that occasion, I shared with many of the Australians that I met Hong Kong's experience on the successful implementation of the "one country, two systems" concept since our reunification with China on July 1, 1997. Today, I am proud to confirm that Hong Kong continues to thrive under this new constitutional order. Despite the many challenges that we have encountered since the reunification such as the Asian financial crisis and the SARS disease, Hong Kong has bounced back each time higher than before. Judge us not by the number of challenges we had to meet, but by our resilience in rising to the challenges. The fact that Hong Kong remains one of the leading

international financial centres, a top trading economy of the world and established common law jurisdiction in which both external investors and the local community have confidence is a testament to the success of "one country, two systems".

The theme of this year's convention, "The Bridge to Opportunities" cannot come at a more opportune time. With the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) that has just come into effect earlier this year, Hong Kong has solidified its position as the premier gateway to trade and investment on the Mainland China. With our wide range of professional and business services, our geographical location and logistics capabilities, Hong Kong remains the first and foremost choice for international businesses and investors looking to expand operations in the Mainland and the Asia-Pacific. Since qualification for CEPA depends not on nationality of the enterprises or the individual service providers but on the substantial presence of the former and the professional qualifications of the latter in Hong Kong, alumni of Australian universities may take advantage of the favourable treatment of Hong Kong companies or service providers under CEPA. This year's convention will no doubt provide you with many useful ideas on how you could utilise Hong Kong as the bridge to opportunities. I look to you to make full use of your talent and ingenuity to seize on the new economic opportunities, to innovate and to transform CEPA into tangible economic benefits.

Before I close, I would like to say a few words for those of you who are visiting Hong Kong. I wish you an enjoyable stay and I urge all of you to make full use of this opportunity to explore our vibrant city. Hopefully in the process you will contribute to our economy by taking advantage of one of the best shopping places in the world. Last but not least, may I wish all of you a most fruitful convention and every success in the years to come. Thank you.

Ends/Thursday, December 2, 2004

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