

**Speech of Ms Teresa Cheng, SC
Secretary for Justice
Italy National Day Reception
3 June 2019 (Monday)**

Consul General [Mr Clemente Contestabile], ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here, for the second year in a row, and I am extremely pleased to see the growing attendance to this event, evidencing the flourishing of the Italian community and expatriate in Hong Kong. I am very happy to join you all tonight in celebration of the National Day of Italy. On behalf of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, may I extend to you, Consul General, and the people of Italy, our warmest congratulations on your National Day.

Trade Relations and Business Ties

2. People in Hong Kong have had a link with Italy for many years and we are grateful to their contribution to the development of this city.

3. Back in 1860, the Catholic religious institute, Canossian Daughters of Charity founded in Verona, Italy, established its presence here with six Canossian Sisters travelling a long way from Venice and Padua to Hong Kong to pursue with their charity work.

4. Thanks to the altruistic spirit of the Canossians, St Francis' Canossian College in Wan Chai was set up in 1868, followed by St. Mary's Canossian College, my alma mater, in Tsim Sha Tsui in 1900 to serve the

growing educational need in Hong Kong. Canossians have also extended their benevolence to the healthcare sector by setting up the Canossa Hospital (Caritas) in the Mid-Level in 1929.

5. The education and welfare service aside, the Italian culture has a great influence on our community, from modern fashion, palatable cuisine, exquisite art exhibition to language learning mentioned by the Consul General. I am delighted to learn that there are now more opportunities for our youth in Hong Kong to learn the language. The first Italian speaking kindergarten is also set to open this year.

6. Back to business – 2018 was a promising year in terms of the relation between Hong Kong and Italy. On top of our healthy trade growth which rose to US\$10.3 billion last year, a considerable amount of goods, adding up to about 10 per cent of the total trade between Italy and the Mainland in 2018, was routed through Hong Kong.

7. Hundreds of Italian companies choose Hong Kong as their bases because we fly the flag of free trade, maintain a level playing field, and uphold a strong rule of law.

8. For the past 25 years in a row, the Heritage Foundation has named Hong Kong the world's freest economy. The rankings and remarks from internationally renowned think tanks affirm and continuously encourage us to cherish our long-standing commitment in sustaining a favourable business environment.

9. The signing of the memorandum of understanding between China

and Italy on cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative during President Xi's visit to Italy this March further offers massive opportunities for expanded ties between our two economies, Hong Kong and Italy, as well. Of course, the Greater Bay Area, which is even closer to home, also provides a very good opportunity for all businesses to capture on and to explore.

Legal Cooperation

10. International co-operation with other places to keep Hong Kong as a safe and clean city is also very important for the business community. The HKSAR Government firmly believes that the existence of a suitable legal framework for surrender of fugitive offenders and mutual legal assistance is a hallmark for the rule of law. Such a framework should be workable, provide the necessary safeguards, and also importantly be applicable to all the jurisdictions in the world.

11. Hong Kong's surrender of fugitive offenders and mutual legal assistance regimes contain prerequisites of co-operation which are in line with international standards. Through these amendments that are being discussed now, we hope to make Hong Kong as an even better place for businesses from all around the world, particularly the Italian business community, to be able to conduct their business in a fair, clean and efficient manner.

Conclusion

12. I believe the friendship, including these deep rooted interactions in the business, culture and legal aspects, between Hong Kong and Italy will only grow stronger and stronger in the many years to come.

13. On this note, ladies and gentlemen, May I ask you to join me in a toast: “To the people of Italy.”