

**Speech of Ms Teresa Cheng, SC  
Secretary for Justice  
Mexico National Day Reception  
13 September 2019 (Friday)**

Acting Consul General (Mr Saul Zambrano), ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It's a pleasure to join you all this evening to celebrate the National Day of Mexico.

2. Mexico and Hong Kong are closely tied in many aspects; in particular both being keen advocates for open and free trade.

3. As the second largest economy of Latin America, Mexico has been actively transforming its economy – privatising, deregulating, while enabling cross-border trade, opening most sectors to private investment as well as boosting intellectual property rights protection.

4. I am pleased to note that Mexico continues to be our largest trading partner in Latin America. Last year, our

bilateral merchandise trade soared by 18.4 per cent over 2017, reaching US\$5.4 billion in total.

5. As mentioned by the Consul General, Hong Kong is the gateway to Asia. It is pertinent to note that, last year, around US\$5.7 billion worth of trade between Mexico and the Mainland was routed through Hong Kong, amounting to about 9 per cent of the total trade between the two countries last year.

6. It is a clear reflection of the longstanding role that Hong Kong plays as a multilateral bridge connecting the Mainland and the world of business, especially under the Belt and Road Initiative. It also reveals boundless opportunities available to Mexican businesses looking for more market presence in the Mainland in collaboration with Hong Kong companies at all levels.

7. Under the leadership of the new President of Mexico, the country is determined to strengthen ties with the Mainland. Just two months ago, your Foreign Secretary met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing, where they

have agreed to develop a roadmap to guide relations between the two economies over the next five years.

8. Among the flourishing cooperation and exchanges between the two countries, Hong Kong's role as an effective connector will become more important. Being the world's freest economy for 25 years in a row as named by Washington's Heritage Foundation, and thanks to our rule of law, judicial independence, level playing field for business and other unique competitiveness, Hong Kong is in a prime position to help international businesses make the most out of opportunities available.

9. Earlier this year, Hong Kong signed our eighth free trade agreement (FTA). We look forward, down the road, to exploring an FTA with the Pacific Alliance, which includes of course, Mexico. As we have heard from the Acting Consul General just now, Mexico and Hong Kong will soon sign an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement. This would no doubt foster further bilateral investment flows and strengthen our bilateral relations.

10. More cross-border activities mean a stronger demand for legal and dispute resolution services. With the benefits of our strong and solid foundation for rule of law and globally renowned arbitration and mediation services, Hong Kong is perfectly placed to be an ideal hub for dispute resolution services to our Mexican partners in expanding their businesses in the region. We would welcome more legal cooperation with Mexican business community and, together, capitalise on the opportunities emerging from various development strategies.

11. Speaking of the rule of law, please allow me, as the Secretary for Justice, to say a few words about the current situation in Hong Kong.

12. The controversies over the past few months, as you have seen, read and heard probably in a disconnected manner from different sources, have unfortunately turned into some violence. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG), in the interest of Hong Kong stands firm to curb any act that goes against the rule of law. Please rest assured that our robust legal system is

well equipped to deal with these violations, and the HKSARG together with all will uphold sternly our rule of law tradition. The city remains an open and welcoming society and a globally connected and dynamic economy.

13. Going forward, as announced by the Chief Executive, to mend the rift in society, we have been and will continue to engage people in dialogues and discuss grievances, issues, problems and solutions in a rational and respectful way. It may take time, but I have no doubt that we will overcome this challenge with the joint efforts of all quarters of society, including our Mexican community.

14. We look forward to more partnership with Mexico down the road. Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me now in a toast: to Mexico, and the people of Mexico, on its National Day. Cheers.