

## **Speech by SJ at the National Day Reception of the State of Qatar (English only)**

Consul General (Mr Ali Saad Al Hajri), ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It is my pleasure to join you, for the second time, at the National Day Reception of the State of Qatar. On behalf of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, may I extend to you, Consul General, and the people of Qatar, our warmest congratulations. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our new Consul General, who assumed office in Hong Kong last month, and am looking forward to more cooperation on the way.

2. It is indeed so apt for us to gather together this evening in half way of December as we are all counting down to a new year. 2022 is a special year that people in our both nations have been longing for, with the FIFA World Cup being hosted in Doha - for the first time in the Middle East, and the Winter Olympics in Beijing – for the first time in China. Sports is a powerful force binding our countries together, as it unites people of all backgrounds and all walks of life. I am so glad to hear from the CG just now that Qatar is all set for the first carbon-neutral FIFA World Cup in the history of the event, to which we, especially the football fans, are very much looking forward.

### **Thriving China-Qatar Co-operation**

3. The China-Qatar relations have been sustaining sound and steady development in the recent years. As China's key strategic partner in the Middle East, Qatar is our country's long-term energy supplier with expanded mutual investment and thriving bilateral cooperation in different areas. Qatar is also among the first countries to join our Belt and Road Initiative. As pointed out by our Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in his visit to Doha this October, China is willing to “strengthen strategic cooperation, jointly safeguard multilateralism”, and “expand mutual investment with Qatar”.

4. Hong Kong, under the unique “one country, two systems” policy, serves as an irreplaceable connector between our country and the rest of the world, including Qatar. With our solid financial and legal infrastructure, as well as a massive pool of talents, Hong Kong has a lot to offer to the global businesses for them to conglomerate by tapping into the multitude of opportunities offered by the Belt and Road Initiative, the National 14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan, the Greater Bay Area Development Plan and the latest Qianhai Plan.

### **Growing Ties between Qatar and Hong Kong**

5. In particular for Qatar and Hong Kong, both places are among the world’s most prosperous economies in terms of GDP per capita. There are abundant opportunities for cooperation between us. I still recall that at my meeting with your former Consul General back in 2019, I was pleased to be updated about the then signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two jurisdictions to boost our cooperation in promoting inbound and outbound investment. On our bilateral merchandise trade, despite the pandemic, the figure in 2020 has skyrocketed 50% to US\$1.5 billion, with the average annual growth rate from 2016 to 2020 reaching almost 65%. With these promising signs, I am confident that the business and people-to-people ties between Qatar and Hong Kong will only grow closer and closer in the years ahead.

### **More Legal Cooperation**

6. Specifically, as the Secretary for Justice, I look forward to more legal cooperation between us. Hong Kong is the only common law jurisdiction in China, with a strong foundation of the rule of law and robust legal fraternity. Our legal system is well tested, open and transparent, rule-based, and independent. Being an international centre for deal-making, legal and dispute resolution services, Hong Kong is ready to partner with more Qatari businesses to unlock the potentials and opportunities that our national development strategies bring.

## **Closing**

7. Ladies and gentlemen, tonight we celebrate Qatari National Day, as well as the long-standing friendship between Qatar and Hong Kong. I believe, with plenty of collaboration opportunities ahead, our business, cultural and people-to-people connections will continue to flourish.

8. As the new year is around the corner, no doubt it is our common wish that the worldwide epidemic will subside in 2022 and our businesses can be back on track. Qatar and China will be hosting two supreme quadrennial sports events. I am sure people in Hong Kong are eagerly awaiting for these events and will be watching each of them with excitement. I only hope that by then we can all do so in a venue together, mask-free, and cheering for the best team. On this note, may I wish you all a happy, prosperous and healthy New Year ahead. Thank you.