

## **Speech by SJ at the Netherland's King's Day reception (English only) (with photo)**

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the Netherland's King's Day reception today (April 27):

Consul-General Mr Arjen van den Berg, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It is a great pleasure to join all of you here to celebrate the King's Day of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, His Majesty King Willem-Alexander's birthday. This year also marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of His Majesty's reign. On behalf of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, may I extend to you, Consul-General and all the people of the Netherlands, our warmest congratulations. On a personal note, I have to say that one of my most memorable trips was a visit to Amsterdam on the Queen's Day at the time of Queen Beatrix probably 20 years ago when the whole city became orange in colour. I think there is a term in Dutch "Oranjegekte"- I apologise for my poor pronunciation. I think it means orange craze, something like that.

Tonight is the first time after the COVID-19 pandemic that we are able to come together again in honour of King Willem-Alexander - and also the longstanding ties between Hong Kong and the Netherlands. I am also very delighted to

meet Mr Consul General again since the dinner hosted by the Chief Executive back in January.

### **Close Ties between the Netherlands and Hong Kong**

Our close ties with the Netherlands have a very long history, which can be traced back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when trades between the Netherlands and southern China, including Hong Kong, began to flourish. Fast forward, last year, the Netherlands was our 15<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner and our second largest trading partner within the European Union with a total trade volume amounting to some HK\$95 billion.

Today, Hong Kong is home to over 180 Dutch companies across different sectors including banking and finance, aviation, innovation, technology, and so on and so forth.

### **Forging closer collaboration and exchange on various fronts**

We have also seen a continuous increase of exchanges and collaborations in other areas. As just mentioned by Mr Consul General, last month, my colleague the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Kevin Yeung, visited the Netherlands to meet with senior Dutch Government officials responsible for culture and sports.

As the Secretary for Justice responsible for legal affairs, I have to mention that earlier in March this year, my Deputy Secretary for Justice, Mr Horace Cheung, together with colleagues from the Department of Justice, paid a visit to The Hague, to promote Hong Kong's legal system and legal services. Among other things, the delegation called on a number of important international bodies and organisations, including the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and they also attended events organised by the Hague Conference on Private International Law, which is a very important international legal body, in short: HCCH.

I am very pleased to have the Secretary General of the HCCH in Hong Kong last November during the Hong Kong Legal Week, in celebration of the 10th anniversary of setting up the HCCH Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Hong Kong. Moreover, I am extremely grateful to the HCCH for choosing Hong Kong as the venue for hosting the 6<sup>th</sup> HCCH Asia Pacific Week in celebration of its 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September this year. That event will be the first large-scale celebration of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region and indeed the world.

### **Solid fundamentals of Hong Kong**

Ladies and gentlemen, the close ties between the Netherlands and Hong Kong are made possible by Hong Kong's unique advantages under the principle of "one

country, two systems”. Under the Basic Law, among other things, Hong Kong has its independent financial and legal system, and is entitled to maintain and develop relations and conclude agreements with foreign states and regions and international organisations in appropriate fields under the name “Hong Kong, China”.

President Xi and other officials of the Chinese Government have repeatedly said that the principle of “one country, two systems” is a good policy that must be adhered to in the long run. With this strong reassurance, there is no doubt that Hong Kong will play an even more important role in various vital national strategies of China such as the Belt and Road initiative and the Greater Bay Area development plan. I am very confident that there will be many more opportunities ahead to enable the Netherlands and Hong Kong to build a better and closer relationship.

On this very happy occasion, I wish now to invite you to join me in a toast: to His Majesty King Willem-Alexander, to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, to the people of the Netherlands and also Hong Kong, China. Cheers.