

# ExCo Non-official Members fully support CE in leading HKSAR Government in its administration

The following is issued on behalf of the Executive Council Secretariat:

The Non-official Members of the Executive Council (ExCo Non-official Members) today (December 14) issued the following statement:

ExCo Non-official Members fully support the Chief Executive in leading the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government in its administration to pursue economic growth, advance development, and address livelihood issues. They also expressed gratitude to President Xi Jinping for the importance he attached to Hong Kong and his care for the city.

During the Chief Executive's duty visit to Beijing, President Xi acknowledged the work of the Chief Executive and the HKSAR Government, emphasising that the Central Government will continue to fully, firmly and accurately implement the "one country, two systems" principle. President Xi's remarks also underscored the importance of reform and innovation, which inspires people to embrace changes, be proactive, and embody a spirit of innovation and creativity.

As the Chief Executive said, the next two and a half years will be a critical period for Hong Kong to move forward, advance from stability to prosperity, and build on its achievement while beginning a new chapter of development. ExCo Non-official Members will continue to fully support the Chief Executive in leading Hong Kong to pursue reforms and changes by offering advices on important policies and actively collaborating with the HKSAR Government to implement various reform measures, with a view to creating new momentum and advantages for economic development, promoting Hong Kong's transition from stability to prosperity through innovation and invention, and advancing high-quality development in Hong Kong together.

ExCo Non-official Members believe that with the unwavering support of the Central Government and the unifying efforts from all sectors of the community, Hong Kong will effectively leverage its advantages of "one country, two systems", rise to challenges, maintain prosperity and stability, and scale new heights.

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## [Red fire danger warning](#)

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

The fire danger situation today (December 14) is red and fire risk is extreme. The countryside is extremely vulnerable to fire. If you are planning to spend the day in the countryside, please take pre-cooked food for a picnic and take all measures to prevent hill fires. The penalty for lighting fires illegally in the countryside is \$25,000 and a year's imprisonment.

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## [Territory-wide flag day today](#)

Wu Oi Christian Centre has been issued a Public Subscription Permit to hold a territory-wide flag sale from 7am to 12.30pm today (December 14), a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said.

Details of the charitable fund-raising activities, including any updated information, covered by the issued Public Subscription Permits have been published on the GovHK website ([www.gov.hk/en/theme/fundraising/search](http://www.gov.hk/en/theme/fundraising/search)). Permits for flag days containing information on contact methods of the flag-selling organisations and the approved flag-selling activities have also been uploaded to the SWD's website ([www.swd.gov.hk/en/ngo/controlofc/flagdays](http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/ngo/controlofc/flagdays)) for reference. For enquiries, please call the SWD's hotline at 2343 2255, or the designated hotline of the 1823 Call Centre at 3142 2678.

In the case of suspected fraudulent flag day activities, people should not make any donation and should immediately report the matter to the Police, the spokesman added.

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## [HKETO, Brussels shares with Dutch companies the opportunities brought by the latest developments of tourism and trade in Hong Kong \(with photos\)](#)

â€‹The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Brussels (HKETO, Brussels) co-organised with the Netherlands Hong Kong Business Association, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and Invest Hong Kong the "Dongzhi business

seminar-cum-luncheon" in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, on December 11 (Amsterdam time), with the theme on tourism and trade developments in Hong Kong. The event has become an annual key business occasion in which prominent speakers from Hong Kong and the Netherlands provide Dutch companies with the latest updates on Hong Kong and the region.

Deputy Representative of HKETO, Brussels, Miss Fiona Li gave a presentation to about 70 business executives in the seminar. She elaborated about Hong Kong's prevailing advantages as an international financial, trading and logistics centre which offers unparalleled connectivity and quality services while highlighted also the latest government policies on promoting tourism. It included hosting more world-class mega-events not just for businesses, but also for sports, arts and culture. Efforts were also stepped up to better leverage the city's unique charms and strengths including our stunning harbour and waterfront, tranquil islands and countryside, rich gastronomy, and east-meets-west heritage to innovate tourism with new attractions and rediscovery of local cityscape.

"Besides establishing Hong Kong as a city of mega events, fusing arts with tourism and developing cultural and eco-tourism are also the directions we are going for", she said. Miss Li added that Hong Kong is well equipped with state-of-art infrastructure to realise these initiatives, namely the Hong Kong Palace Museum and M+ Museum in the West Kowloon Cultural District, and the Kai Tak Sports Park to be opened in early 2025. In addition to the three-runway system of Hong Kong International Airport coming into operation this November, Hong Kong is expected to become an even more popular tourist destination globally.

Citing the launch of more direct flight routes between Hong Kong and European cities in summer 2025 and Hong Kong's latest initiatives to reduce the duty rate for liquor to boost the development of logistics industry, tourism as well as high-end food and beverage consumption, Miss Li expected that more international visitors would be attracted to Hong Kong. "We are ready to welcome Dutch and other European travellers to experience the city's unique chic and glamour", Miss Li concluded.



# Remarks by CE at media session in Beijing after reporting to President Xi Jinping (with photos/videos)

Following are the remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session in Beijing after reporting to President Xi Jinping on work yesterday (December 13):

Reporter: President Xi has asked you to seek reforms and new economic momentum, does that mean that you have failed to put forward new ideas in related areas and what will you do to answer his call? The second question is the city will face another looming \$100 billion deficit, is the President concerned about it and will that derail his vision for the city to thrive through innovation?

Chief Executive: I think the President has already made his statement in the meeting with me, which was broadcast in the media, in which he fully recognised the efforts and contributions of myself and my Government. I think that recognition speaks for itself. I am a believer of "there is never the best, only the better". That is also the doctrine advocated by President Xi. In this area, we see things from the same angle. And I have been making reports to him as to how I can create extra synergy, new developments, and also create economic growth for Hong Kong. President Xi, of course, mentioned the importance of integrating into the development of the nation, and I fully agree that our country gives us the greatest opportunities. That is why we need to have a good grasp of all the opportunities we have and then make different policies to realise the potential.

I thank President Xi for recognising our efforts and also encouraging us to continue to govern in the direction which has been recognised not just by the society as correct, but also internationally, as you can see in the rise in rankings in different areas, including Hong Kong's position as a financial centre has risen one position and now is rated as the number three in the world. And our international competitiveness has gone up two rankings and now is ranked number five in the world, so on and so forth. President Xi's recognition, of course, gives strong encouragement to me and to my Government, and we are very thrilled to receive President Xi's recognition, but we will try our best to do even better, because while we thank President Xi and the Central Government for recognising our efforts and trusting us, it is important that we do our best so as to show our gratitude to the caring guidance and the strong support by President Xi and the Central Government.

I have reported in my duty report the economic situation of Hong Kong, as well as the fiscal position of the Government. And I have explained that a series of strategies that will be adopted to ensure that we will eventually make a balanced budget. That may take a few years, but we do have a strategy, and I've explained and that strategy to the Central Government. We will be starting the Budget consultation very soon. The Financial Secretary is

seriously working on a number of possible strategies to ensure that we will eventually make a balanced budget. I would imagine that there will be a lot of good opinions and advice from different sectors. That has been the attitude of the Hong Kong Government to listen as much as possible to the wisdom and experience of the community. And I'm sure that the Financial Secretary will take a very serious attitude to listen to all the different views, and we will eventually strike a good balance. But what is important, I think, in trying to balance the budget is, of course, we will be trying to reduce the expenditure, we'll try to increase income, but we'll do it with a balanced approach so that the society will not be affected too seriously. More importantly, I think government income will be increased if the economy grows, because if businesses can make money and opportunities are more for them to realise their potential, then government income will be more as a result of income tax, as a result of corporate tax. We have been working hard to strengthen the economy of Hong Kong. And we have been, for example, expanding outside Hong Kong, making visits to ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), to Middle East, likely later, to Central Asia. And I've been to Latin America as well, during which I witnessed the signing of a FTA (Free Trade Agreement). So we are making all opportunities to ensure that Hong Kong's economic growth will continue and will thrive in that regard. And we are also creating extra growth areas, new growth areas such as what I have described in my Policy Address, building an international gold trading centre, and also to create a commodity trading ecosystem. All these will create extra growth as a result of which I think businesses can make more profits, and then the government's incomes will increase.

Also, I think, Invest Hong Kong, and also our OASES (Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises), the office which attracts strategic enterprises to come to Hong Kong, has been doing very well. So the number of enterprises registered in Hong Kong is now a record high. And also the strategic enterprises that have been invited to come to Hong Kong will be creating over, say that is a HK\$40 billion investment which will create 13 000 jobs. So all these are growth areas that we are working hard. In due course, I think, enterprises will be making more profits, and the government's expenditure will eventually be balanced by the income we will get more as a result.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the remarks.)



