

Full Text: Xi's speech at meeting marking HK's 20th return anniversary, inaugural ceremony of 5th-term HKSAR gov't

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday delivered a speech at the meeting celebrating the 20th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland and the inaugural ceremony of the fifth-term government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

The following is the full text of his speech:

Address at the Meeting

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of

Hong Kong's Return to the Motherland and

The Inaugural Ceremony of

The Fifth-Term Government of

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

1 July 2017

Xi Jinping

Fellow Compatriots,

Dear Friends,

Today, we are meeting on this solemn and joyous occasion to both celebrate the 20th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland and hold the inaugural ceremony of the fifth-term government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

First of all, on behalf of the Central Government and the people of all ethnic groups across the country, I wish to extend our cordial greetings to all the people in Hong Kong and our warm congratulations to Madam Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, the newly inaugurated fifth-term Chief Executive of the HKSAR, principal officials of the fifth-term HKSAR government and members of the Executive Council. I also express our heartfelt thanks to all our fellow Chinese, both at home and abroad, and foreign friends for their good wishes and support to Hong Kong.

Meeting here on the shores of Hong Kong, which have stood the test of time and seen profound changes, we are filled with thoughts and emotions, as we

reflect on the extraordinary journey we have taken to get where we are today.

The destiny of Hong Kong has always been intricately bound with that of the motherland. After modern times, with a weak China under corrupt and incompetent feudal rule, the Chinese nation was plunged into deep suffering. In the early 1840s, Britain sent an expeditionary force of a mere 10,000 troops to invade China and got its way in forcing the Qing government, which had an 800,000-strong army, to pay reparations and cede the island of Hong Kong to it. After the Opium War, China was repeatedly defeated by countries which were far smaller in size and population. Kowloon and "New Territories" were forcibly taken away. That page of Chinese history was one of humiliation and sorrow. It was not until the Communist Party of China led the Chinese people to victory in a dauntless and tenacious struggle for national independence and liberation and founded New China that the Chinese people truly stood up and blazed a bright path of socialism with distinctive Chinese features. Thanks to close to four decades of dedicated efforts since the launch of the reform and opening-up policy in the late 1970s, we have entered a new era in the development of the Chinese nation.

It was against the historical backdrop of reform and opening-up that Mr. Deng Xiaoping put forward the great vision of "One Country, Two Systems", which guided China's diplomatic negotiations with the United Kingdom that led to the successful resolution of the Hong Kong question, an issue that was left over from the past. Twenty years ago today, Hong Kong returned to the embrace of the motherland. This ended past humiliation and marked a major step forward toward the complete reunification of China. Hong Kong's return to the motherland has gone down as a monumental achievement in the history of the Chinese nation. Hong Kong has since then embarked on a journey of unity and common development with the motherland.

Fellow Compatriots,

Dear Friends,

Time flies fast! It has been 20 years since Hong Kong's return to the motherland. According to China's tradition, a man enters adulthood at the age of 20. So today, we are celebrating the coming of age of the HKSAR, which has grown exuberant like a bamboo or a pine tree. Looking back at the HKSAR's growth, we can proudly conclude that thanks to the support of the motherland and with an international vision and an innovative spirit, Hong Kong has in the last two decades continued to develop itself as a modern metropolis. The practice of "One Country, Two Systems" in Hong Kong is a success story recognized by all.

– Since its return to the motherland, Hong Kong has joined the remarkable journey toward the great renewal of the Chinese nation. As a special administrative region directly under the Central Government, Hong Kong has been re-integrated into China's national governance system since the very day of its return. The Central Government exercises jurisdiction over Hong Kong in accordance with China's Constitution and the Basic Law of the HKSAR, and corresponding systems and institutions have been set up for the special administrative region. Hong Kong's ties with the mainland have grown

increasingly close, so have its interactions and cooperation with the mainland. The people of Hong Kong have played an active part in China's reform, opening-up and modernization drive and made their unique and important contribution to this endeavor. They have ever stronger confidence in China's development and national renewal, and share with the people on the mainland the dignity and honor of our great motherland.

– Since its return to the motherland, Hong Kong has maintained prosperity and stability. Hong Kong has kept its distinct features and strengths. Its allure of being a vibrant metropolis where the East meets the West has remained as strong as ever. Under the practice of "One Country, Two Systems", Hong Kong has retained its previous capitalist system and way of life, and its laws have remained basically unchanged. The people of Hong Kong, now masters of their own house, run their local affairs within the purview of autonomy of the HKSAR. The people of Hong Kong enjoy more extensive democratic rights and freedoms than at any other time in its history. Having withstood the impact of the Asian financial crisis, the SARS epidemic and the global financial crisis, Hong Kong has emerged stronger as an international financial, shipping and trading center; and it has been consistently rated by many international institutions as one of the freest economies and most competitive regions in the world. Hong Kong has made substantial advances in various programs, increased external interactions and raised its international profile.

What has happened in Hong Kong fully demonstrates that the concept of "One Country, Two Systems" provides the best solution to the historical question of Hong Kong and the best institutional arrangement to ensure Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability after its return. "One Country, Two Systems" has proved to be a workable solution welcomed by the people.

Fellow Compatriots,

Dear Friends,

"One Country, Two Systems" is a great initiative pursued by China. It offers a new way of thinking and a new formula to the international community in addressing similar issues. It is another contribution made by the Chinese nation to promoting global peace and development. And it embodies the Chinese vision which values openness and inclusiveness. To uphold and implement the principle of "One Country, Two Systems" meets the interests of the Hong Kong people, responds to the needs of maintaining Hong Kong's prosperity and stability, serves the fundamental interests of the nation, and meets the shared aspiration of all Chinese. That is why I have made it clear that the Central Government will unswervingly implement the policy of "One Country, Two Systems" and make sure that it is fully applied in Hong Kong without being bent or distorted. This will enable us to keep advancing in the right direction.

"One Country, Two Systems" is a pioneering initiative that has no precedent to follow. Its application entails an evolving process. Currently, some new developments have occurred and new issues emerged regarding its application in Hong Kong. Hong Kong needs to improve its systems to uphold national

sovereignty, security and development interests. It needs to enhance education and raise public awareness of the history and culture of the Chinese nation. It is yet to build public consensus on some major political and legal issues. The Hong Kong economy also faces quite a few challenges. Hong Kong's traditional strengths start to lose the edge while new drivers of growth are yet to emerge. Housing and other issues that affect the daily life of the people have become more serious. To address these challenges, meet the expectation of Hong Kong people for a better life and advance Hong Kong's development in all sectors, we must stay on the right and steady course, gain a full understanding of the policy of "One Country, Two Systems" and faithfully implement it. Hence, I wish to take the opportunity to talk to you about how to better implement the policy of "One Country, Two Systems" in Hong Kong.

First, it is imperative to have a correct understanding of the relationship between "One Country" and "Two Systems". "One Country" is like the roots of a tree. For a tree to grow tall and luxuriant, its roots must run deep and strong. The concept of "One Country, Two Systems" was advanced, first and foremost, to realize and uphold national unity. That is why in the negotiations with the United Kingdom, we made it categorically clear that sovereignty is not for negotiation. Now that Hong Kong has returned to China, it is all the more important for us to firmly uphold China's sovereignty, security and development interests. In conducting day-to-day affairs, we must be guided by a strong sense of "One country", firmly observe the principle of "One Country", and thus correctly handle the relationship between the HKSAR and the Central Government. Any attempt to endanger China's sovereignty and security, challenge the power of the Central Government and the authority of the Basic Law of the HKSAR or use Hong Kong to carry out infiltration and sabotage activities against the mainland is an act that crosses the red line, and is absolutely impermissible. On the other hand, on the basis of "One Country", the "Two Systems" should and have every reason to stay in harmony and reinforce each other. We must both adhere to the "One Country" principle and respect the differences of the "Two Systems", both uphold the power of the Central Government and ensure a high degree of autonomy in the HKSAR, both give play to the role of the mainland as a staunch supporter of Hong Kong and enhance Hong Kong's own competitiveness. At no time should we focus only on one aspect to the neglect of the other. Only in this way can we ensure that the ship of "One Country, Two Systems" will break the waves, sail steadily and go the distance.

Second, it is imperative to always act in accordance with the Constitution and the Basic Law. Hong Kong's return completed a major transformation of its constitutional order. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law of the HKSAR together form the constitutional basis of the HKSAR. The Constitution is the fundamental law of the State. It embodies the common will of people of all ethnic groups in our country, and represents the legal origin of the system of special administrative region. The Basic Law is a basic legislation enacted in accordance with the Constitution. It provides for the system and policies that should be practiced in the HKSAR, codifies into law and makes institutional arrangement for the principle of "One Country, Two Systems", and provides legal safeguards for the practice of "One

Country, Two systems" in the HKSAR. In observing the constitutional order prescribed by the Constitution and the Basic Law, it is important both for the Central Government to exercise power in accordance with the law and for the HKSAR to fulfill its own responsibilities as the main actor. We should improve the relevant institutions and mechanisms for implementing the Basic Law and raise public awareness of the Constitution and the Basic Law in Hong Kong, particularly among civil servants and the young people. These steps are integral to practicing "One Country, Two Systems", advancing the rule of law nationwide and upholding the rule of law in Hong Kong.

Third, it is imperative to always focus on development as the top priority. Development, an abiding pursuit, is crucial for Hong Kong's survival, and it holds the golden key to resolving various issues in Hong Kong. The concept of "One Country, Two Systems" was advanced to achieve two goals: namely, peacefully resuming the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, and maintaining Hong Kong's status as an international financial, shipping and trading center in order to promote further growth. Currently, more focus should be given to development. Teenagers want to grow up happily. Young people want to bring out the best of their talent. People in mature years want to be successful, and the seniors want to enjoy their golden years. Obviously, all this can only be achieved through development. Hong Kong enjoys the backing of the motherland and is open to the world. It therefore has many favorable conditions for development and distinctive competitive advantages. In particular, China's continuous and rapid development over the years provides an invaluable opportunity, an inexhaustible source of strengths and broad space for Hong Kong's development. As a saying in Hong Kong goes, "After leaving Suzhou, a traveler will find it hard to get a ride on a boat", meaning an opportunity missed is an opportunity lost. It is important to cherish the opportunity, seize it and focus your energy on Hong Kong's development.

Fourth, it is imperative to always maintain a harmonious and stable social environment. The concept of "One Country, Two Systems" gives expression to the vision of peace and harmony in the Chinese culture. It embodies a very important tenet, namely, seeking broad common ground while setting aside major differences. Hong Kong is a plural society. So it comes as no surprise that there are different views and even major differences on some specific issues. However, making everything political or deliberately creating differences and provoking confrontation will not resolve the problems. On the contrary, it can only severely hinder Hong Kong's economic and social development. Bear in mind the larger interests, communicate in a sensible way and build more consensus: this is the best way to find solutions to issues over time. On the part of the Central Government, we are ready to talk to anyone who loves the country, loves Hong Kong and genuinely supports the principle of "One Country, Two Systems" and the Basic Law of the HKSAR, no matter what political views or position he or she may hold. Harmony brings good fortune, while discord leads to misfortune. Hong Kong is an affluent society, but it also faces enormous challenges posed by profound changes in the global economic environment and the increasingly intense international competition. It cannot afford to be torn apart by reckless moves or internal rift. The people of Hong Kong must be united, work together and help each

other, and by so doing, you will ensure the success of Hong Kong, your common home.

Fellow Compatriots,

Dear Friends,

China is now in a decisive phase to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. People of all ethnic groups across the country are engaged in a joint endeavor to realize the Two Centenary Goals and fulfill the Chinese Dream of national renewal. Ensuring the continued success of the practice of "One Country, Two Systems" in Hong Kong is part and parcel of the Chinese Dream. A cause with public participation and public support is sure to achieve success. We should ensure the success of development on the mainland which practices the socialist system; we should also ensure the success of development in Hong Kong which practices the capitalist system. We should have every confidence that we will succeed!

Today, the new SAR government is officially inaugurated. It shoulders major responsibilities and has a lofty mission to perform. It is my hope that in the next five years, the HKSAR government will unite people of all sectors in Hong Kong to fully and faithfully implement the principle of "One Country, Two Systems", stay committed to the basis of "One Country", well leverage the benefits of "Two Systems", and make solid efforts to ensure success of its various endeavors. It is important for you to advance with the times, actively perform your duties, and continue to improve government performance. It is important to focus on priorities, fully leverage Hong Kong's strengths and open up a new horizon for Hong Kong's economic development. It is important to put people first, help them overcome difficulties, especially address prominent economic and livelihood issues that people are concerned with, and truly increase their sense of contentment and happiness. It is important to raise awareness and enhance guidance, especially to step up patriotic education of the young people, to give them more care and support and help them grow up well.

The Central Government will continue to support the Chief Executive and the HKSAR government in exercising law-based governance. We will continue to support Hong Kong in growing its economy and improving people's lives, and in leveraging its strengths and role in advancing the Belt and Road Initiative, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Renminbi internationalization and other major development strategies. The relevant Central Government departments will actively consider adopting concrete measures to make it more convenient for the people of Hong Kong to study, work and live on the mainland, and provide more opportunities for them to pursue career development on the vast mainland. I am sure that the people of Hong Kong will enjoy brighter development prospects and live better lives while contributing their share to China's overall development.

Hong Kong has the strong backing of the great motherland and the strong support of the Central Government and the people of the mainland. Hong Kong has gained a wealth of experience over the past 20 years since its return; it has a solid foundation for achieving further development, and it enjoys the

concerted dedication of the HKSAR government and people in all the sectors. With all this in mind, I am convinced that the practice of “One Country, Two Systems” in Hong Kong will write a new chapter and create new splendor for Hong Kong!

Thank you.