

High-Level Meeting cum First Plenary of the Hong Kong-Sichuan Co-operation Conference held in Sichuan (with photo)

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the Sichuan Provincial People's Government held the high-level meeting cum First Plenary of the Hong Kong-Sichuan Co-operation Conference (the meeting cum plenary) today (May 11) in Chengdu, Sichuan. The meeting cum plenary established a new co-operation mechanism as a platform for the multifaceted co-operation between Hong Kong and Sichuan.

The meeting cum plenary was led by the Chief Executive of the HKSAR, Mrs Carrie Lam, and the Secretary of the CPC Sichuan Provincial Committee, Mr Peng Qinghua. The Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, Mr Zhang Xiaoming, and the Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, Mr Wang Zhimin, also attended the meeting cum plenary as special guests.

At the meeting, both sides agreed to establish the Hong Kong-Sichuan Co-operation Conference. Plenaries of the Conference would be jointly convened from time to time as necessary by the Chief Secretary for Administration of the HKSAR Government and the Vice-Governor of the Sichuan Provincial People's Government responsible for Hong Kong and Macao affairs.

"Exchanges between Hong Kong and Sichuan have always been close. Through the HKSAR's participation in the reconstruction work after the massive May 12 Wenchuan earthquake 10 years ago, a solid foundation has been laid down for the co-operation between Hong Kong and Sichuan. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the reform and opening up of China and the 10th anniversary of the massive Wenchuan earthquake. It is especially meaningful to enhance our co-operation with Sichuan at this special juncture," Mrs Lam said.

Hong Kong and Sichuan reached consensus on the following 11 co-operation areas:

The Belt and Road Initiative and economic and trade fronts

To jointly promote strategic partnership between enterprises of the two places for collaborative participation in the Belt and Road Initiative. The HKSAR Government will invite Sichuan Province to join the third Belt and Road Summit in Hong Kong in June 2018. Sichuan enterprises will be invited to participate in investment and business matching sessions and one-to-one business matching meetings, with a view to facilitating co-operation between Hong Kong and Sichuan enterprises in seeking out opportunities related to the Belt and Road Initiative.

The HKSAR Government will organise various types of investment promotion events, such as seminars, in Chengdu and the other major cities in Sichuan Province, to promote Hong Kong's unique advantages as an international financial centre, with a view to attracting Sichuan enterprises to make use of Hong Kong as an investment platform and to jointly capitalise on the opportunities brought about by the Belt and Road Initiative.

Cultural and creative industries

The Chengdu Management Committee of the Tianfu New Area of Chengdu, Sichuan Province, the Hong Kong Federation of Design Associations and other participating parties have signed a Strategic Co-operation Framework Agreement to take forward the Hong Kong-Sichuan Design and Innovation Hub project. The goal is to construct a platform for in-depth co-operation, with culture and creativity at its core, and design, music and film/TV as extensions.

Hong Kong and Sichuan will enhance cultural exchange in the art form of Xiqu. The West Kowloon Cultural District Authority will send a delegation to Sichuan to study the development of Sichuan opera. The HKSAR Government will also invite operatic troupes from Sichuan Province to participate in the Chinese Opera Festival in Hong Kong when appropriate opportunities arise.

Innovation and technology

To encourage exchange and co-operation in innovation and technology among universities and research and development (R&D) institutions of the two places, including the joint establishment of incubation bases, R&D centres and technology transfer platforms. The HKSAR Government will encourage the supporting organisations of Hong Kong technology start-ups to strengthen exchanges with the relevant organisations in Sichuan Province, with a view to promoting the development of new and advanced technologies and the related industries of the two places.

Finance

To encourage Sichuan enterprises which meet the relevant requirements to "go global" using Hong Kong's financial platforms, including cross-boundary listing, bond issuance, merger and acquisition, risk management, and the establishment of corporate treasury centres in Hong Kong. To encourage Sichuan enterprises which meet the relevant requirements to finance green projects through the capital market of Hong Kong, including the issuance of green bonds in Hong Kong.

Youth development

To jointly promote co-operation in youth exchange. Under the Funding Scheme for Youth Exchange in the Mainland and the Funding Scheme for Youth

Internship in the Mainland, the HKSAR Government will provide funding support to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of Hong Kong to organise exchange and internship programmes in Sichuan for young people of Hong Kong. The Sichuan Provincial People's Government plans to invite young people of Hong Kong to visit Sichuan through the HKSAR Government's funding schemes under the framework of "Ba-Shu Cultural Exchange for Young People of Hong Kong", with a view to providing opportunities for them to experience the local customs and learn about the new developments of Sichuan, thereby fostering youth exchange of the two places.

The HKSAR Government will continue to organise and enhance the Youth Internship Programme at Wolong National Nature Reserve in the summer of 2018.

Building and construction

The two places will continue to co-organise exchange programmes for construction-related professionals from Sichuan to receive short-term training in Hong Kong.

Education

To continue to promote the pairing up of sister primary and secondary schools, and the co-operation between higher education institutions of the two places. To overcome the constraint of physical distance, the HKSAR Government will set up an online platform for sister schools to facilitate exchanges.

To strengthen the co-operation in vocational education of the two places, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the Department of Education of Sichuan Province will enhance co-operation in curriculum development, teacher training, internship and career development for students, as well as innovation and entrepreneurship. The VTC would also co-operate with the Sichuan Vocational and Technical College of Communications in drawing up a talent development programme for railway engineering professionals. The two parties will explore the use of digitalised teaching materials for vocational training, and further co-operate in curriculum development.

Chinese medicine and food safety

To step up co-operation in Chinese medicine, including enhancing academic exchanges, experience-sharing in Chinese hospital development and clinical services, promoting co-operation in research of Chinese medicine testing and standards, conducting meetings from time to time to foster exchange of talents and knowledge, and to jointly promote the internationalisation of Chinese medicine.

To further step up co-operation in food safety between the two places through exchanges on risk management and standards, co-operation in testing technologies, the creation of synergy in emergency management and the

establishment of a reciprocal visit and exchange system.

Tourism

To forge co-operation in multi-destination tourism and join hands to conduct activities including publicity and promotion, business matching and familiarisation visits.

Airport and railway construction and management

The MTR Corporation Limited is discussing with the Chengdu Rail Transit Group the co-operation model for the construction and management of the Chengdu metro, property development and the training of railway professionals. The two parties have signed a Memorandum of Co-operation, and will set up a working group to study the feasibility of joint property development above the stations along the rail lines in Chengdu.

The Airport Authority Hong Kong and the Sichuan Airport Group will strengthen exchanges among aviation professionals. The Hong Kong International Aviation Academy and the Sichuan Airport Group will jointly formulate the 2018 airport operations and management training proposal. The Sichuan Airport Group will also send its staff to join the courses conducted by the Academy in Hong Kong.

Facilitation measures for Hong Kong people

For the policy measures introduced by the relevant Central Government departments to facilitate Hong Kong people studying, working and living in the Mainland (facilitation measures), the Sichuan Provincial People's Government will ensure the smooth implementation of these measures at the local level, so as to allow Hong Kong people in Sichuan Province to enjoy the same treatment as Mainland residents in the areas of education, employment, setting up business and daily life matters. The Sichuan Provincial People's Government has rolled out a "one-stop" advisory services portal to serve Hong Kong people in Sichuan Province by providing information related to the facilitation measures and answering enquires.

Officials of the HKSAR Government accompanying the Chief Executive to attend the meeting cum plenary include the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung; the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip; the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan; the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong; and other representatives of the relevant bureaux and departments.

