

SHA's speech at Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum 2019 (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, at the Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum (ACCF) 2019 Ministerial Panel today (December 12):

Director Wang (the Director of the Palace Museum, Dr Wang Xudong), honourable ministers, heads of delegations, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. On behalf of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I welcome you to the Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum 2019. It is our great pleasure to meet old friends and welcome new ones who join this Forum for the first time.

This year's ACCF marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Since its inception in 2003, the ACCF has become the premier platform in Asia that brings together cultural ministers to share insights and experience in furthering arts and cultural development as well as collaboration. This year's ACCF is particularly unique as we have extended our reach beyond Asia, to bring to you cultural performances by artists from various cultural capitals in Asia and Europe. I am truly grateful for your support throughout all these years towards this 11th edition.

Located at the heart of Asia, Hong Kong is a gateway to the world. Having more than a thousand flights daily to over 220 destinations, Hong Kong is within five hours' flying time of half the world's population and four hours' flying time of most major cities in Asia. The new High Speed Rail, running from our city centre, conveniently connects us with the national high-speed rail network. Hong Kong has been and will remain an important city bridging cities and countries, as a hub for different cultures to meet, influence one another and evolve. The unique cultures and history in Hong Kong present a dialogue that transcends time and bonds the East and the West.

Bonding East and West

As a melting pot of the eastern and western diverse cultures, Hong Kong has all along been active in international arts and cultural exchanges. The Government has progressively increased funding to support international artists and arts groups to present their productions in Hong Kong, and local artists to actively participate in the international art scene. We are endowed with vibrant cultural festivals in Hong Kong throughout the year, where more than 8 000 performances by local artists and artists from near and far are presented annually. Different training and internship schemes for arts administrators and artists to study and exchange experience with their counterparts around the globe.

Museum is one prime idea house where the display and exchange of wisdom can reach a broad spectrum of the public. Two weeks ago, we held the second Museum Summit in partnership with the British Museum where over 30 dedicated leading figures and professionals from renowned museums explored the redefinition of museums in the backdrop of technological advancement.

The strong cultural links between Hong Kong and countries across the world would not have been materialised without the support from the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, as well as Consulates-General and Consulates in Hong Kong. I look forward to more cultural exchanges in the years to come.

Transcending Time

While Hong Kong is a modern and multicultural metropolitan, we cherish and strive to safeguard our unique Chinese cultural heritage. There are 480 items of intangible cultural heritage on the city's inventory – from social practices, rituals and festivals to traditional crafts and foods. A dedicated funding scheme has been set up for strengthening the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, to revitalise Chinese traditional culture by engaging audiences beyond the small enclave of specialists, and ensuring that our heritage will continue to be passed down from generation to generation.

Looking Ahead

Another round of exciting upgrades of Hong Kong's arts and cultural scene is taking shape. Stretching across 40 hectares of land, the West Kowloon Cultural District is one of the world's largest cultural projects blending arts, culture, education and public space. Major facilities include Xiqu Centre – a world-class arts venue dedicated to promoting the rich heritage of Chinese opera; M+ museum – one of the largest museums of modern and contemporary visual culture in the world; Hong Kong Palace Museum – a unique collaboration with the Palace Museum in Beijing to exhibit its extensive collection outside the Mainland on a long-term basis; Lyric Theatre Complex – a centre of excellence showcasing the best of Hong Kong and international dance and theatre.

In addition to the West Kowloon Cultural District, the reopening of newly expanded Hong Kong Museum of Art two weeks ago and the East Kowloon Cultural Centre in 2021 will all provide world-class venues which gather the best artists and ideas from across the globe. We are all eager to present to you a well-equipped world-class cultural metropolis in your future visits.

Concluding Remarks

In the previous months, Hong Kong has been facing unprecedented difficulties, but we will remain resilient to overcome any challenges ahead. I believe that arts and culture transcend any boundaries and differences, where co-operation and mutual support will always prevail in strengthening people to people bonds and building inclusive societies. Once again, I'd like to express my sincere gratitude towards cultural ministers and representatives

of participating countries for your continued support and contribution to the ACCF. I hope you will enjoy the visits and I look forward to our exchanges that would surely bring us closer together. Thank you.