

Sixth Joint Conference on Advancing Hong Kong's Full Participation in and Contribution to Belt and Road Initiative held in Beijing (with photos)

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and relevant Mainland ministries held the sixth Joint Conference on Advancing Hong Kong's Full Participation in and Contribution to the Belt and Road Initiative (B&RI) in Beijing today (July 19), which is its first physical meeting since 2019.

Member of the CPC Leadership Group of the NDRC Mr Guo Lanfeng attended the conference with Mainland officials led by him, including the Secretary General of the NDRC, Mr Wu Hao, who is also the Convenor of the Joint Conference, and representatives from the NDRC, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, the Supreme People's Court, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Commerce, the People's Bank of China, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, the National Administration of Financial Regulation, the National Immigration Administration, and the National Medical Products Administration.

The Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, in his capacity as the chairperson of the Working Group on Belt and Road Development (Working Group) under the Steering Group on Integration into National Development, led HKSAR Government officials to attend the conference. They included the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development and Hong Kong-side Convenor of the Joint Conference, Mr Algernon Yau, and representatives from the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB), the Department of Justice, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau, the Belt and Road Office of the CEDB, and the Office of the Government of the HKSAR in Beijing. The Hong Kong Monetary Authority was also represented at the meeting.

Noting that the report of the 20th National Congress has highlighted the importance in promoting high-standard opening up as well as the high-quality development of the B&RI, Mr Lam said that the priority of the Working Group is to promote the high-quality development of co-operation between Hong Kong and Belt and Road countries in trade and commerce, professional services and cultural exchanges, as well as deepen co-operation with the Mainland, thereby giving full play to Hong Kong's distinct advantages in connecting the Mainland and the rest of the world. The Joint Conference has significantly promoted the in-depth communication and exchanges between Hong Kong and the

Mainland, better facilitating Hong Kong's integration into national development.

At the meeting, Mr Yau underlined the efforts made by the HKSAR Government in taking forward the B&RI upon resumption of normalcy early this year, including actively opening up new markets, strengthening bilateral and multilateral economic and trade relationships with Belt and Road countries, as well as attracting enterprises and talent.

He pointed out that the Middle East mission led by the Chief Executive in February this year, which comprised various representatives from the business and professional sectors, had been fruitful with significant outcomes. The HKSAR Government will continue to leverage Hong Kong's unique advantages and work on emerging economies as a priority with a view to grasping related opportunities and addressing challenges, as well as capitalising on Hong Kong's role as the functional platform. In addition, various areas of work will continuously be stepped up in pursuing the high-quality development of the B&RI, including in such areas as green finance, voluntary carbon trading, Belt and Road trading and two-way investment, as well as Belt and Road talent and capacity building, so as to establish impactful Belt and Road programmes and events under the Hong Kong banner.

The meeting in particular focused its discussion on work proposals that the HKSAR Government put forward for consideration by Mainland ministries on the three areas of legal and dispute resolution services, finance and risk management, and innovation and technology in taking forward the B&RI, on which representatives of relevant Joint Conference Mainland ministries had provided feedback. They also apprised the meeting respectively on their work in supporting Hong Kong's participation in and contribution to the B&RI. The HKSAR Government is grateful for the support expressed by relevant Mainland ministries at the meeting regarding various work proposals, and will continue to actively follow up with the latter to better facilitate Hong Kong's integration into national development.

The meeting also discussed the work priorities of the HKSAR Government in promoting Hong Kong's participation in and contribution to the B&RI in the year ahead. The HKSAR Government will continue to strengthen Hong Kong's role as a connecting platform for international circulation between the country and the rest of the world, dovetail with the key national development strategy of the B&RI, and earnestly open up markets for businesses. With the staunch support of the country, Hong Kong's path in taking forward the B&RI would be even more steadfast and successful.

The Arrangement between the NDRC and the HKSAR Government for Advancing Hong Kong's Full Participation in and Contribution to the B&RI signed between the HKSAR Government and the NDRC in 2017 provides the direction and a blueprint for Hong Kong's full participation in and contribution to the B&RI. The Joint Conference mechanism was set up to follow up on the implementation of the Arrangement, and meetings are convened at least once a year.

