

Speech by Acting CE at Austrian Chamber of Commerce Hong Kong: 15th Anniversary Heurigen (English only)

Following is the speech by the Acting Chief Executive, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at Austrian Chamber of Commerce Hong Kong: 15th Anniversary Heurigen today (November 2):

Wilhelm (Chairman of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce Hong Kong, Mr Wilhelm Brauner), Monika (Consul General of Austria in Hong Kong, Mrs Monika Müller-Fembeck), Mr Roessler (Austrian Trade Commissioner for Hong Kong, Mr Franz Roessler), ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It gives me much pleasure to join you all this evening to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (AustroCham). Indeed, it was only a week ago that I addressed the Austrian community in honour of its national day and the 100th Anniversary of the Republic of Austria.

Established in December 2003, AustroCham has been playing a significant role in fostering closer ties between Austria and Hong Kong. Apart from bolstering business exchanges, AustroCham has been enriching our cosmopolitan city life by bringing us Austrian wine, cuisine and music, and like tonight, the fabulous live performance by the Vienna Boys Choir Academy Concert Choir.

On the business front, Austria is one of our valuable trading partners in Europe. Hong Kong also serves as a window to facilitate trading between Austria and Mainland China, around 7.8 per cent of the total trade between Austria and Mainland China last year was routed through Hong Kong.

Our good and close trade and economic relationship is certainly reflected in the visit of many senior Austrian officials to Hong Kong lately. We are particularly pleased to have received Mr Sabastian Kurz, the Federal Chancellor, and his delegation, comprising three Federal Ministers, in Hong Kong in August 2018.

We are deeply impressed by Vienna's development as a smart city. As you know, Hong Kong is now actively pressing ahead with the development of innovation and technology, as well as smart city projects. We can certainly learn a lot from Vienna's experience.

We do not just settle with being an international trade and financial centre. Capitalising on the advantages of "One Country, Two Systems", our strategic location at China's doorstep, rule of law, level-playing field for all business, simple and low tax system, superb infrastructure and free flow of capital and information, intellectual property, research and development capability, we have huge potential to become an international innovation and

technology hub as well.

Hong Kong has also been ranked first in economic freedom by the US-based Heritage Foundation for 24 consecutive years and the Fraser Institute of Canada since 1996. We are also named the second most competitive economy in the world by Swiss-based International Institute for Management Development this year. Hong Kong ranked fifth for ease of doing business out of nearly 200 economies in the World Bank's "Doing Business 2018" report.

Hong Kong is the most ideal gateway for Austrian business to tap the Asian market. Riding on the memorandum of understanding on co-operation in technology start-up ecosystems signed between Hong Kong and Austria in 2016, I am confident that businesses of the two places, in particular innovation and technology companies and start-ups, could join hands on even closer collaboration.

The Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) further offers Austrian companies set up in Hong Kong, preferential treatment to access the Mainland market. In addition, we forged with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) last November a free trade agreement and an investment agreement. Expected to enter into force in January 2019, the two agreements will create new opportunities for business and bolster trade and investment flows between Hong Kong and ASEAN.

With two mega national initiatives, that is the Belt and Road Initiative and the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, being actively pursued by the Central People's Government, Hong Kong's active participation and strategic location will serve as the most ideal springboard for overseas companies, including Austrian companies, to tap the resources and markets in the Belt and Road countries as well as Mainland cities in the Bay Area. And on the Greater Bay Area development, Hong Kong's connectivity to the Mainland is further strengthened since the Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge came on stream. The two important infrastructure will bolster the synergistic effect and create more business and development opportunities for Hong Kong, the Asia region and beyond.

On this note, my warmest congratulations to AustroCham on its 15th Anniversary. I also wish the Chamber's every success in the years ahead.

I wish you all a very enjoyable evening. Thank you.