

Speech by Acting CE at reception in celebration of 24th anniversary of establishment of HKSAR (with video)

Following is the translation of the speech by the Acting Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the reception in celebration of the 24th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre this morning (July 1):

Distinguished guests, fellow citizens,

It gives me great pleasure to celebrate with you today the 24th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). The Chief Executive is in Beijing at the moment attending the celebration activities of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. It is my honour to attend and speak to you at this reception as the Acting Chief Executive.

The HKSAR Establishment Day on July 1 each year gives us an opportunity to proudly review the history of Hong Kong's return to the Motherland, to firmly reiterate that "one country, two systems" is the best arrangement for maintaining Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability, and to solemnly pledge to further promote the implementation of "one country, two systems". This year, July 1 also celebrates the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. As we celebrate this important milestone of the Party, we should have a deeper understanding of "one country, two systems", which was put forward and implemented under the Party's leadership. As the Chief Executive said at the thematic forum on the Party and "one country, two systems" on June 12, the smooth return of Hong Kong to the Motherland is an integral part of the Party's century-old cause. Throughout the process, the Party demonstrated its clear determination to fulfil the historical mission of erasing the century-long national humiliation and reunifying the nation, while taking care of the vital interests of Hong Kong people by preserving the systems and way of life that they are familiar with under the innovative concept of "one country, two systems".

For the past 24 years, the Central Government has unwaveringly supported the faithful implementation of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong and has acted in accordance with the Constitution and the Basic Law. Although the acts of serious violence since the latter half of 2019 and the attempts of anti-China disruptors to take advantage of the loopholes in the HKSAR's electoral system to paralyse the Government and even seize power have brought unprecedented challenges to Hong Kong, the Central Government has stayed true to its original aspiration in implementing "one country, two systems" and helped Hong Kong solve the problems at the constitutional level. Within one year, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress enacted the

Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the National Security Law) and amended Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law to improve the HKSAR's electoral system, halting chaos and restoring order in Hong Kong and implementing "patriots administering Hong Kong". These two major measures taken by the Central Government have laid a solid foundation for the faithful implementation of "one country, two systems" and the long-term stability of Hong Kong.

Under the leadership of the Chief Executive, the HKSAR Government has duly performed our duty to safeguard national security in accordance with the National Security Law in the past year by preventing, suppressing and imposing punishment for acts and activities endangering national security and by promoting national security education across the territory. I must emphasise that it is expressly provided in Article 4 of the National Security Law that human rights shall be respected and protected in safeguarding national security. Therefore, while national security is protected, our citizens continue to enjoy freedoms under the law, including freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of demonstration, and more.

The development of Hong Kong has always been closely tied to the development of the Motherland. Hong Kong has been both a contributor and a beneficiary in China's reform and opening-up. Our country's sustained and rapid developments in recent years have provided golden opportunities for Hong Kong. However, anti-China disruptors and individuals with ulterior motives took advantage of the loopholes in the electoral system to worm their way into the HKSAR's political structure. They kept undermining the relationship between the Central Government and the HKSAR, creating confrontation and obstructing governance. This has hindered Hong Kong's integration into the country's overall development. Ensuring "patriots administering Hong Kong", the improved electoral system enables Hong Kong to focus on development and leverage its advantage of being backed by the Motherland and open to the world. With the support of the Central Government's policies, we will strive to consolidate and enhance our competitiveness as an international financial, trading and shipping centre, and promote the development of emerging industries including innovation and technology, culture and art, aviation, intellectual property trading and more.

Although Hong Kong has experienced storms and waves, facts have proved that as long as we fully and accurately implement the "one country, two systems" policy by upholding the principle of "one country" and leveraging the advantages of "two systems", Hong Kong will be able to move forward steadily. Our country's Belt and Road Initiative, Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development, domestic and international dual circulation development pattern, as well as the National 14th Five-Year Plan's support for Hong Kong, all bring unlimited development opportunities to Hong Kong. With social and political stability restored now, Hong Kong definitely has the conditions to rebound from the doldrums and create a brighter future. In fact, thanks to the success of the anti-epidemic work in Hong Kong, there have been significant improvements in the local economic and employment

situation in recent months. The real GDP in the first quarter of 2021 grew by 7.9 per cent year-on-year, ending six consecutive quarters of contraction. The unemployment rate has dropped from a 17-year high of 7.2 per cent to the latest 6 per cent. Social distancing measures have also been gradually relaxed to allow further resumption of people's normal life.

To keep this good momentum going, we must raise our vaccination rate without delay. I call on citizens to actively respond to the Government's "Early Vaccination for All" campaign. Please do not hesitate, and get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect yourselves, your family and friends, and the overall interests of the community.

Distinguished guests, fellow citizens, it has been four years since the current-term Government took office. We have faced unprecedented challenges and have constantly summed up our experience to improve governance. Today, the governing team is more confident about the future of Hong Kong than at any moment in the past four years. In the coming year, we will continue to take a firm stand in safeguarding national security, improving the implementation of "one country, two systems", and pressing ahead with a pragmatic attitude and a fighting spirit. As long as we stand united, Hong Kong will certainly stride forward and scale new heights. Thank you.