

Speech by Acting CS at reception to celebrate 76th Anniversary of the Independence Day of Republic of the Union of Myanmar (English only)

Following is the speech by the Acting Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing, at a reception to celebrate the 76th Anniversary of the Independence Day of Republic of the Union of Myanmar today (January 23):

Consul General Han (Consul General of Myanmar to Hong Kong-SAR, Mr Han Win Naing), Deputy Commissioner Pan (Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Mr Pan Yundong), ladies and gentlemen, good evening,

I am very delighted to be here tonight, with you, in celebration of the 76th anniversary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar's independence.

I am also pleased to add that it is also the 74th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Myanmar and China.

As the Consul General noted, just a few minutes ago, this is Myanmar's first Independence Day celebration in Hong Kong in three years. That, ladies and gentlemen, is a welcome confirmation that we are now well into the post-pandemic economy – and that business is back and presents more opportunities for both our economies.

Hong Kong and Myanmar, of course, have long cooperated in trade, business and cultural exchange.

It helps, and greatly, that Myanmar is a member of ASEAN, our second-largest trading partner. And with the Hong Kong-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement in full effect since 2021, I am confident that trade ties and prospects between our two economies will only grow.

In 2022, bilateral trade between Hong Kong and Myanmar totalled some US\$300 million. In terms of investment, Hong Kong is among your nation's top investors in real estate, electricity and the garment business. Indeed, as the Consul General himself noted, Hong Kong is Myanmar's fourth-largest foreign investor.

Being a longstanding supporter of free and open trade, Hong Kong is committed to expanding regional economic integration and cooperation.

We share the vision of regional prosperity behind the establishment of RCEP – the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Our early accession to RCEP can only boost growth in trade and relations in general between Hong

Kong and Myanmar. Of that, I am confident.

I note with respect that Mr Min Thu, Myanmar's Deputy Union Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, spoke at the Eco Asia Conference here just three months ago.

I am grateful as well that the Consul General attended the eighth Belt and Road Summit, last September, here in Hong Kong. Needless to say, I welcome more Myanmar participation at this year's Belt and Road Summit.

Myanmar is not only among the Belt and Road's many economies, it is also a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Today's Belt and Road, now into its second decade, has become a force for global economic growth, giving rise to wide-ranging projects and prospects. I look forward to working closely with the businesses, and the people, of Myanmar to realise the promise of the Belt and Road for us all.

Beyond business, there is boundless potential in pursuing arts and cultural exchanges between our two economies, our two peoples.

And a fine example of these exchanges is our Belt and Road Scholarship programme which welcomes Myanmar students to pursue full-time, publicly funded university studies here in Hong Kong. This school year, the programme supported 10 students from Myanmar. In the years to come, I hope to see more Myanmar students taking advantage of Hong Kong's world-class, post-secondary education.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me now in a toast: to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the 76th anniversary of its independence. Cheers!