

Speech by CE at 6th “Belt and Road” Initiative International Forum and “Belt and Road” Cooperation and Partnership Model Agreement Conference (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the 6th "Belt and Road" Initiative International Forum and the "Belt and Road" Cooperation and Partnership Model Agreement Conference today (October 13):

Deputy Director Liu Guangyuan (Deputy Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)), Deputy Commissioner Fang Jianming (Deputy Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR), Dr Priscilla Leung (Co-Chair of the Belt and Road International Research Institute International Law Forum Organising Committee), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to you all. It gives me great pleasure to be here today, to speak to you at this international forum on the Belt and Road Initiative. I am pleased, as well, to be joining you at the launch of the Belt and Road Cooperation and Partnership Model Agreement.

It has been a greatly gratifying month for the Belt and Road Initiative, and also for Hong Kong. On this day last month, I opened the eighth Belt and Road Summit, organised by the Hong Kong SAR Government and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, here in Hong Kong. And, just two days ago, I addressed the Law Society of Hong Kong's International Summit, with a theme on promoting peace and prosperity on the Belt and Road. And now, I'm pleased to address you, this gathering of eminent jurists and legal professionals celebrating the Belt and Road Initiative on its 10th anniversary.

What a decade it's been. Brought to inspired life by President Xi Jinping, the Belt and Road has long belonged to the world. At last count, more than 150 countries and regions, and 30 international organisations have signed Belt and Road co-operation agreements and related documents.

Earlier this week, the Central Authorities published a white paper, presenting the progress of the Belt and Road Initiative since its inception in 2013.

The white paper spotlights the Belt and Road's remarkable rise from ideas to action, vision to reality. The Initiative's central goal – common development and shared prosperity – is a compelling path to global well-being. A path to peace and prosperity, to openness, innovation and social

progress.

No less important, it has laid the foundations for gainful people-to-people ties all over the world. And, of course, the Belt and Road continues to build on its ambitious goals and people-to-people ties.

I can attest to that. I made a visit to a number of countries along the Belt and Road, in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, together with high-level delegations from Hong Kong. In doing so, we welcomed the support of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member states on Hong Kong's accession to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or RCEP, which is the world's largest free trade agreement. We also expanded our ties with ASEAN and the Middle East, with the delegations' signing of a wide variety of MOUs and letters of intent with different countries.

They appreciate Hong Kong's unique strengths under the "one country, two systems" principle, including our robust legal and regulatory framework, and our proactive participation in such national strategies as the Belt and Road Initiative. We are the only common law jurisdiction in our country. In aligning with international business rules and regulations, Hong Kong serves as an important conduit between the Mainland of China and the international community.

Hong Kong has, to date, signed nine mutual legal assistance arrangements with the Mainland on civil and commercial matters. This offers greater convenience and wider legal protection to Belt and Road investors, who choose Hong Kong and our law for their contracts and as a venue for dispute resolution.

Our country supports Hong Kong's rise as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre, one of eight key areas that the National 14th Five-Year Plan looks to Hong Kong to gain regional or international expertise in.

The International Organization for Mediation Preparatory Office was set up in Hong Kong in February. It's the first international organisation dedicated to providing mediation services for settling international disputes. And it will certainly contribute to international relations built on peace and harmony along the Belt and Road.

A sound legal system for negotiating international agreements is essential to building a rules-based business environment. The International Academy of the Belt and Road, which organises today's forum, has dedicated significant effort in promoting exactly that. The Academy's work in enhancing the Belt and Road's dispute resolution mechanism, and its participation in the Belt and Road Cooperation and Partnership Model Agreement, have been instrumental in providing cross-boundary trade and investment improvements. For that, and a great deal more, I am very grateful.

On Monday, I will lead a Hong Kong delegation of some 70 senior government officials and high-profile institutional and business leaders to

Beijing for the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

The two-day event will be attended by government leaders and representatives from more than 130 countries and over 30 international organisations. Hong Kong is immensely honoured to be invited to address various sessions of the Forum, signifying our most prominent participation yet in this high-powered event.

I look forward to telling the business and political heavyweights from all over the world about the good and real stories of Hong Kong, especially our vital role in the Belt and Road, in helping to build a global community with a rewarding and shared future for us all.

My thanks to the organisers of today's Forum – the International Academy of the Belt and Road, together with Zhejiang University's Academy of International Strategy and Law, and the Hague Conference on Private International Law Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific – for staging today's meaningful gathering.

I wish you all the best of business, and health, in the coming years.

Thank you very much.