

Speech by CE at Path of Democracy 9th Anniversary Fundraising Gala Dinner (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the Path of Democracy 9th Anniversary Fundraising Gala Dinner today (June 6):

Ronny (Convener of the Path of Democracy, Mr Ronny Tong), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. I'm pleased to be here with you, tonight, in celebration of the 9th anniversary of the think tank, the Path of Democracy.

I congratulate Ronny on his energy, commitment and more importantly, the puberty he always has. And I hope that puberty is not just on developing new talents, but also on other things. Since its founding in 2015, the Hong Kong think tank has remained true to its mission. And, I'm pleased to say, it has done so consistently and collaboratively, through research, dialogue and engagement.

Indeed, the Hong Kong SAR Government last year granted subsidies to two research studies of the think tank, on public education towards citizens' rights and responsibilities under the Basic Law, and on Hong Kong's business environment for the international community.

I welcome your considered views, and constructive advocacy, on the development of Hong Kong's unique "one country, two systems" principle.

Indeed, reasoned dialogue and knowledgeable exchange enable progress. In a free and enterprising city such as Hong Kong, it is essential to maintain a harmonious environment, one in which people from all walks of life can engage in rational discourse, sharing ideas that inform and enlighten us.

The Hong Kong SAR Government has its own agency to tap into brilliant thinkers and strategic achievers, locally and globally. That's the Chief Executive's Policy Unit (CEPU).

The CEPU has a mandate to boost the Government's capacities in research and advocacy, on long-term and strategic issues. In doing so, it collaborates with academia and a wide variety of think tanks, including of course the Path of Democracy. These, in turn, contribute the expert views and fresh ideas that help keep Hong Kong's economy resilient and innovative, while maintaining the diversity and vitality of our community.

That, ladies and gentlemen, helps us realise the full potential of "one country, two systems" principle, the cornerstone of Hong Kong's success – the only city in the world to enjoy both the China advantage and the global

advantage.

Our future flourishing depends on "one country, two systems". On better integration into the national development. This includes the "eight centres" we've been entrusted with under the National 14th Five-Year Plan, as well as our pivotal role in the Greater Bay Area and the Belt and Road. At the same time, it means Hong Kong remaining as an international city, highly connected with the international world, pursuing a world of opportunities.

To take full advantage of the "one country, two systems" principle, we must ensure that our economy and our community have what it takes to meet today's increasingly complex challenges and demands – and still come away with fresh prospects.

Every sector of our community, including all think tanks, institutions and intellectuals, has a key role to play. We count on your wealth of experience, and expertise, to come up with new means to stay connected with both traditional and emerging markets, and with every economy keen on mutually rewarding development. To help us take full advantage of the opportunities that follow.

In that regard, I'm pleased to note the recent exchange trip to Beijing by the Path of Democracy and its Hong Kong Academy of Politics and Public Policy. Ronny, no doubt, kept the Hong Kong delegates busy, very busy.

The group was received by Director Xia Baolong and met with a variety of officials, scholars and community leaders. And, from everything I've heard, the visit was welcomed by all concerned. In Ronny's words, "increasing understanding and building mutual trust solves problems."

Ladies and gentlemen, where there's a will there's a way. There are no problems we can't solve. But the will must be helped by wise ideas. We must also work together as a Hong Kong team. Together, we can fast-track Hong Kong's progress from stability to prosperity – and all of it under the wide and welcoming embrace of "one country, two systems".

My congratulations again on the Path of Democracy's 9th anniversary.

The Hong Kong SAR Government, and I, look forward to a long, co-operative and mutually rewarding future with all of you.

Thank you.

