[Speech by CE at reception in celebration of 75th Independence Day of the State of Israel (English only) (with photo/video)](#)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the 75th Independence Day of the State of Israel today (June 20):

Consul-General Mr Amir Laty (Consul-General of the State of Israel in Hong Kong), Deputy Commissioner Pan Yundong (Deputy Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It gives me great pleasure to join you all tonight in celebrating the 75th Independence Day of the State of Israel, at this wonderful reception hosted by the Consulate-General of Israel in Hong Kong.

I would like to start by offering my warmest congratulations to the people of Israel, for the remarkable achievements you have made over the past 75 years.

Israel is known for its rapid emergence as a "start-up economy" and a global innovation hub. Israel is one of the world's top locations for entrepreneurs and venture capitalists. Hong Kong and Israel are both dynamic economies, and we share the same spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship. I believe we have great potential in deepening our collaboration in such areas as trade, innovation and technology.

Indeed, Hong Kong and Israel have all along shared cordial trade relations. In terms of merchandise trade, Israel has been our second largest trading partner in the Middle East, with our total merchandise trade amounting to US$3.4 billion in 2022. In turn, Hong Kong was Israel's 10th largest trading partner in 2020.

Under the "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong is bestowed with the unique advantage of having the strong support of national strategies, while maintaining excellent connectivity with the rest of the world.

With the support of the National 14th Five-Year Plan, Hong Kong is determined to develop into an international innovation and technology centre.

Hong Kong is the only Asian city with five universities in the world's top 100, and boasts strong research and development (R&D) capabilities. Our world-renowned scholars and experts produce forward-looking R&D results and

adopt high scientific research standards.

Since taking office a year ago, this term of the Hong Kong SAR Government has been committed to capitalising on Hong Kong's upstream strengths, and has been promoting the commercialisation of our outstanding R&D outcomes. We will launch a Research, Academic and Industry Sectors One-plus Scheme, in a scale of HK$10 billion, within this year to incentivise universities in the transformation of their research outcomes.

I am certain that there is much room for furthering our co-operation with Israel on the technology front. This past Sunday, I paid a visit to the Hong Kong Science Fair, which featured many innovative proposals and ideas from students in the primary and secondary schools of Hong Kong.

Alongside encouraging the future innovators of our city, I was pleased to have the chance of touring the exhibition booth of an Israeli robotics firm. They showed me its latest idea of developing an autonomous robot for cleaning the exteriors of skyscrapers. As we all know, Hong Kong is world-famous for having a concrete jungle full of high-rise buildings. So the business potential for this very innovative robotics project from Israel sounds pretty promising to us all!

The exchange of experiences and best practices of Hong Kong and Israel is clearly conducive to the advancement of technology development. A cause which Hong Kong, as Asia's world city and a gateway to the vast Chinese market, and Israel, a hub of innovation and entrepreneurship in the Middle East, can certainly work together in contributing to the progress of mankind.

On that note, I would like to once again congratulate Israel on its 75th Independence Day. I wish you all a pleasant evening, and look forward to our continued friendship and co-operation. Thank you.