

Speech by CS at Belt and Road Advanced Professional Development Programme in Power and Energy Graduation Ceremony (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at the Belt and Road Advanced Professional Development Programme in Power and Energy Graduation Ceremony today (April 1):

Dr Lawrence Li (Deputy Council Chairman of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)), Professor Xi Guang (Vice President of Xi'an Jiaotong University), Mr Su Qingmin (Director of the Management Centre of Educational Affairs of the State Grid of China Technology College), Mr Wan Chi-tin (Managing Director of the Hongkong Electric Company Limited), Mr Liu Zhiming (Deputy Inspector of the Department of Educational Scientific and Technological Affairs of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), consuls general, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is my great pleasure to be invited, now for the second time, to officiate at the graduation ceremony of the Belt and Road Advanced Professional Development Programme. First, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to all graduates, particularly those from the Belt and Road regions.

Indeed, I am most impressed by the positive response that the programme has received. The return of this quadripartite flagship programme this year is most timely as the sprawling network of the Belt and Road Initiative spanning Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa has expanded rapidly over recent years. So far, more than 120 countries have indicated support for the Initiative.

Led by the Silk Road International School of Engineering and jointly developed by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Xi'an Jiaotong University, State Grid Corporation of China and Hongkong Electric Company, the Programme is well positioned to reinforce further our ties with emerging economies along the Belt and Road corridors and help our professionals tap the immense opportunities offered by the Initiative.

Embedded with "five areas of connectivity", namely policy co-ordination, financial integration, unimpeded trade, facilities connectivity and people-to-people bonds, the Belt and Road Initiative provides new impetus not only to the global economy, but also sustainable development. I believe that as part of PolyU's Belt and Road Strategic Platform, this Programme echoes well with one of the key focuses of the Initiative on the establishment of energy

partnerships. Hong Kong has a unique role to play in this vision. The strengths of Hong Kong's energy sector in system operation, manpower development and project financing are most pertinent.

In respect of system operation, Hong Kong's electricity supply is safe, reliable and affordable, which is essential for powering economic growth. Hongkong Electric Company, a partner of this programme, has upheld successfully a reliability rating of over 99.999 per cent since 1997, reaching 99.9999 per cent in 2017, which is almost unparalleled in other parts of the world. I understand that you have visited their facilities and I am sure that you find their rigorous system and talent pool most impressive. Hong Kong stands ready to showcase our power companies' expertise and operational experience to other Belt and Road countries that have plans to develop and modernise their electricity systems.

As regards manpower development, PolyU is renowned for nurturing a pool of talented technicians and engineers in Hong Kong for over 80 years. It is the first publicly funded, post-secondary technical institution in Hong Kong that offers courses in mechanical engineering and building construction. Over the years, graduates of PolyU and other higher education institutions in Hong Kong have dedicated their career to ensuring that our electricity systems meet the highest international standards. They are the unsung heroes behind Hong Kong's success story. Given our institutions' significant contribution to professional education, applied research and community partnership, they are well positioned to be the pioneers in launching training programmes for professionals from Belt and Road countries, and I do encourage them to do so.

Regarding project financing, Hong Kong enterprises and professionals have been actively participating in numerous energy projects in regions along the Belt and Road. Our companies have not only invested in traditional electricity generation systems in India and Southeast Asia, but also in renewable energy and smart grids. As Asia's leading financial centre, Hong Kong is well placed to play on the strength of our financial infrastructure and comprehensive capital-raising channels to help meet the financing needs of Belt and Road investments and projects. I am certain that many energy infrastructure projects in the region will continue to benefit from our companies' investment. In fact, a company listed in Hong Kong has formed a partnership to establish a fund with an initial capital of US\$160 million to invest in the energy sector in Asia and markets along the Belt and Road corridors.

No less important, Hong Kong stands ready to be the professional services platform for Belt and Road projects. We have a deep pool of world-class talents in various areas who are experienced in leading and implementing international and large-scale projects. Their strengths cover not only the electricity and engineering industries, but also architecture, surveying, accounting, law and consulting, and more.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Belt and Road Initiative provides a golden opportunity for Hong Kong to capitalise on our distinct advantages as the key link of and the prime platform for the Belt and Road. In particular, for

power and energy projects, Hong Kong has a lot to offer in terms of system operation, capacity building and project financing. I look forward to seeing graduates from this Programme participate in developments along the Belt and Road and foster our links upon returning to your countries.

On this encouraging note, I would like to extend again my warmest congratulations to the graduates today. I also wish the programme continuous success in the years to come. Thank you.