

Speech by DCS at Spanish National Day Reception in Hong Kong (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing, at the Spanish National Day Reception in Hong Kong today (October 12):

Consul General Miguel Aguirre de Cárcer (Consul General of Spain in Hong Kong), 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 Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), ladies and gentlemen,

Buenas noches. Good evening.

I'm honoured to be here, with you, tonight for the Kingdom of Spain's national day. As the Consul General noted, just a few minutes ago, he is hosting his first national day reception since his arrival in Hong Kong, a year ago in August. This is also my debut appearance at the Spain national day reception. And I do hope this is not my last one. Not after seeing the fine Spanish food and drinks beckoning us all here this evening.

The many delights of Spanish food and drink aside, tonight's celebration is a happy reminder that business is back in Hong Kong. That Hong Kong and Spain are once again openly, actively working to create mutually rewarding business and investment opportunities.

Spain, the European Union's fourth largest economy, has a great deal to offer Hong Kong.

And our city of ceaseless industry and business appetite is again flush with promise, I'm pleased to say.

One of the world's leading financial centres, and China's leading financial centre, Hong Kong is also fast emerging as an innovation and technology (I&T) hub. Indeed, I&T is just one of eight critical sectors in which our nation looks to Hong Kong to play a regional or international hub role.

We are confident we have what it takes to do so: excellent basic research and world-class universities, a legal system that protects intellectual property rights, financial and professional services prowess and an unfettered flow of capital, information and people.

The Northern Metropolis, straddling our boundary with Shenzhen, will soon rise as an I&T hub and a critical conduit between Hong Kong and the

Greater Bay Area.

What we need now, what we will need tomorrow, are the right companies, professionals and visionary entrepreneurs to fill our strategic I&T demands. We're making good progress on that front, as well. Just last week, the Chief Executive hosted a launching ceremony celebrating partnerships formalised through our OASES which stands for Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises.

Since OASES was launched less than 10 months ago, we have attracted nearly 30 companies setting up, or expanding, their businesses here in Hong Kong. They come from a wide range of specialties, including healthcare, financial technology, artificial intelligence and advanced manufacturing. And they will be investing more than HK\$30 billion, creating some 10 000 jobs.

It's an auspicious beginning. And soon enough, I'm hopeful we will welcome Spanish companies through OASES or via one of the Government's other talent initiatives. Or simply because they see a flourishing future here in Hong Kong, alongside around 80 Spanish companies that now call Hong Kong home. Let me add that nearly 80 European companies have opened offices in Hong Kong so far this year. That's up an encouraging 7 per cent, year on year.

Beyond business, Hong Kong is rising, too, as an arts and culture destination, with the West Kowloon District, one of the world's largest cultural developments. And we have our nation's backing to become an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange.

As the Consul General noted, cultural co-operation, and a welcome variety of events, are also returning, brightening our respective creative offerings. Indeed, this past summer West Kowloon's M+ museum brought its "Yayoi Kusama: 1945 to Now" exhibition to the grand Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

A week from tomorrow, the annual Spanish Film Festival opens here on October 20 at the K11 Art House.

And tomorrow and through the weekend, Hong Kong welcomes La Fiesta, a festival of everything Spanish – flamenco and ronqueo, that's bluefin tuna cutting, included. I do hope it also includes the eating following the cutting. In any case, there will be plenty of Spanish food and drinks on offer. And it's all taking place at the PMQ Courtyard and Marketplace. Olé!

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me now in a toast: to the people of Spain on its national day!

Cheers!

