

# Speech by FS at Reception on Occasion of National Day of Russia (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Reception on the Occasion of the National Day of Russia (June 12):

Consul General Sagitov (Consul General of the Russian Federation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and the Macao SAR, Mr Igor I. Sagitov), 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 SAR Mr Pan Yundong), Consuls General, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening.

It is my pleasure and privilege to attend the Russia Day reception. This is a significant occasion for the Russian Federation.

I'm pleased to note that there are currently over 1,000 Russians living in Hong Kong. Occasions such as this give us an opportunity to meet some of you in person.

As Hong Kong has resumed full normalcy and is open to the world – to people and to business – we welcome more visitors from Russia, and we look forward to more face-to-face exchanges in the future.

We also look forward to strengthening our bilateral trade and commercial ties.

In March this year, President Xi Jinping paid a State Visit to Russia. That visit is an important step towards raising investment and economic cooperation between the two nations. In particular, both nations see promising synergies between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union.

In fact, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, which was first proposed by President Xi in 2013. Deeply rooted in the Initiative is the spirit of openness, inclusiveness, peace, development, cooperation, and mutual benefit. The annual trade volume between China and Belt and Road countries has doubled – from around US\$1 trillion in 2013 to more than US\$2 trillion in 2022. With our world-class fund-raising platform and professional services expertise, Hong Kong is the key link in this great endeavor. We stand ready to contribute to common prosperity and better serve the needs of the economies involved.

Business aside, as we press ahead with innovation and technology development at full steam, we welcome more Russian scientists, professionals and entrepreneurs to come and explore the tremendous opportunities together with us. As you may know, the Government of this term has been very aggressive in attracting talent. To this end, we rolled out the Top Talent

Pass Scheme and upgraded several other immigration schemes last December. As at the end of May this year, the schemes together attracted around 84,000 applications, of which around 49,000 had been approved.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are also keen to foster more cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and Russia. As a city that understands both the East and the West, we have been designated by our country as a centre for international cultural exchange.

Russian culture is deeply appreciated by Hong Kong people, ranging from Russian ballet to Russian films, and from Tchaikovsky to Tolstoy. I believe Russian composers and artists are indeed one of the favourites of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

And of course, food would be an important part of our cultural exchange. Not to mention Vodka!

Last December, we welcomed Russia's Minister of Culture, Mrs Olga Lyubimova to our Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum. The Minister's visit was very successful and fruitful and would certainly spur more cultural cooperation between Hong Kong and Russia.

With more magnificent new cultural venues like those in the West Kowloon Cultural District, I am sure we will host more Russian artistes to showcase their talents here, Asia's leading cultural hub.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am confident that the long-standing business and cultural links between Hong Kong and Russia will grow from strength to strength, riding on the back of new opportunities for closer ties between us.

Thank you all, and I wish you a Happy Russia Day.

Last but not least, please join me in proposing a toast: "To the people of the Russian Federation".

