

DG(S) Bruno Luk's remarks at
Reception of Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra Concert
(September 1, 2018, Singapore)

Minister Counsellor of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Singapore Mr Zhang Xumin, Artistic Director and Principal Conductor for Life of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra Maestro Yan Huichang, Executive Director of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra Dr Celina Chin, Ambassadors, Ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening! I am delighted to welcome all of you to the Reception of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra Concert in Singapore today.

This year, we have the honour to invite and sponsor the internationally acclaimed Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra to stage a concert here in Esplanade. As some of you may remember, the Orchestra was here four years ago performing to a full house. I must congratulate the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra for returning to Singapore tonight to perform at another sold-out concert.

Founded in 1977, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra is the only professional, full-sized Chinese orchestra in Hong Kong with an establishment of 91 professional musicians. Renowned for being “a leader in Chinese ethnic music” and “a cultural ambassador of Hong Kong”, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra has been invited to perform all around the world including Europe, North America, Asia, Australia and as far as the Arctic Circle. It has been unremittingly playing an active role in demonstrating how the East meets the West in Hong Kong's vibrant arts and culture scene.

Hong Kong has been famous for being a premier financial centre and business metropolis. But when you look beyond the walls of the city's skyscrapers, you will see a Hong Kong as a thriving international cultural hub full of dynamism, creativity and diversity. With nine

flagship performing arts groups including the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra and a thousand troupes, Hong Kong has offered around 8,000 performing arts shows which draw millions of audience every year. People who are keen on performing arts are kept busy throughout the year as a wide variety of arts festivals and signature events have filled the city's arts calendar. Just to name a few prominent examples, the Hong Kong Arts Festival in spring, the Hong Kong International Film Festival and Le French May from March to May, the Chinese Opera Festival and International Arts Carnival in summer.

To reinforce Hong Kong's strong credentials as an international cultural hub, the Hong Kong Government is investing heavily to develop the city's cultural hardware and software.

The West Kowloon Cultural District, taking shape on a prime 40-hectare site, is a long-term strategic investment by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government to promote the development of art and creative industries, meet the growing cultural needs of the public, attract and nurture artistic talents, and strengthen Hong Kong's position as an international art and cultural metropolis. Being one of the largest cultural projects in the world, the West Kowloon Cultural District will feature a variety of arts and cultural facilities such as those for exhibitions, Chinese traditional operas and dance theatres. The construction of the Cultural District is in full swing. It has launched operation in phases with the opening of M+ Pavilion in 2016. We are excited that the city's cultural ecology will be further enriched with the project's full-scale operation in a few years' time.

Besides, the Hong Kong Government has earmarked HK\$216 million (S\$37 million) over the next six years to groom arts administrators to support the further development of arts and culture; a funding of HK\$800 million (S\$138 million) was allocated for the Art Development Matching Grants Pilot Scheme to encourage the community and private sector to sponsor arts and cultural activities. I have every confidence that government initiatives such as the above will help elevate Hong Kong to a prominent arts and cultural hub in the world.

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Singapore has been continuously promoting cultural and people-to-people exchanges between Hong Kong and the ASEAN region since our establishment 23 years ago. The launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, which is not confined to trade and business connectivity, has reinforced our commitment in boosting people-to-people interactions in the Belt and Road countries. Cultural exchanges can enhance mutual understanding which is conducive to sustainable bilateral relations. Hong Kong is well positioned to be an important window for cultural exchanges given our open and inclusive cultural atmosphere.

With the opening of Hong Kong's third ASEAN economic and trade office in Bangkok next year, I look forward to more frequent cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and the ASEAN region, with a view to building new and closer ties as well as fostering stronger collaboration.

Tonight, the world-class music talent from the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra will perform a debut piece and a selection of iconic Chinese classical pieces, taking us through the time tunnel to the Qin, Han and Tang dynasties, when cross-regional interaction between the East and the West can be dated back. Without further ado, let me conclude my remarks by wishing the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra another successful performance and all of you an enjoyable evening. Thank you.