

Second meeting of Chief Executive's Council of Advisers on Innovation and Strategic Development held

The Chief Executive's Council of Advisers on Innovation and Strategic Development held its second meeting today (June 5) to deliberate on how Hong Kong could enhance collaboration with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), pursuant to the signing of a Free Trade Agreement and a related Investment Agreement in November last year, which are expected to come into force in January 2019. Members were of the view that new opportunities for collaboration could be found in each of the five areas of connectivity under the Belt and Road Initiative, namely policy co-ordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bond.

Members reviewed the existing trade relationship between Hong Kong and the ASEAN countries and were briefed on Hong Kong's edges in various sectors. In particular, members focused on the investment opportunities arising from the huge infrastructure needs in the ASEAN countries and discussed the strategies to fully leverage Hong Kong's unique advantages under "One Country, Two Systems" to participate in these projects. With the high level of professional expertise in Hong Kong and our position as international financial, transportation and trade centres, members agreed that Hong Kong may act as a platform for ASEAN companies accessing the Mainland market and a valuable partner for Mainland companies "going global".

Members provided constructive advice to the Government on the strategies to deepen Hong Kong's relations with the ASEAN countries. They also urged the Government to enhance its efforts in assisting the private sector to tap into the vast ASEAN market.

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, said, "Southeast Asia plays an important role in the Belt and Road Initiative. At present, ASEAN is Hong Kong's second largest trading partner in merchandise trade and the third largest in services trade. It is important for Hong Kong to capitalize on the existing relationship with ASEAN and take another step forward. Hong Kong will open a new Economic and Trade Office in Bangkok, the third one in ASEAN after Singapore and Jakarta."

The Council is a high-level body to advise the Chief Executive on Hong Kong's future development and strategies for driving innovation. It will give advice on Hong Kong's strategic positioning in the global and regional contexts and directions of economic development with an aim of enhancing Hong Kong's competitiveness and growth potential, provide guidance on evidence-based research and studies on related issues with a view to enhancing policy formulation to meet changing development needs, and advise on stakeholder

engagement and public participation in the policy formulation and consensus building process.