

Speech by FS at cocktail reception of Constitution Day of Norway (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the cocktail reception of Constitution Day of Norway today (May 17):

Ambassador Brudeset (Norwegian Ambassador to China, Ms Signe Brudeset), Director General Wei (Director General of the Consular Department of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Mr Wei Wenxiu), Honorary Consul Chao (Norwegian Honorary Consul in Hong Kong, Ms Sabrina Chao), ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening.

I'm delighted to be here, with you, in celebration of Norway's Constitution Day. Delighted, too, that Norway's Ambassador to China and Mongolia, Ms Brudeset, could join us, here in Hong Kong, for this evening's reception.

Constitution Day may sound like a rather formal occasion. But having done some reading, and entertaining viewing, I can tell you it looks like one of the world's happiest national days. A day when children are celebrated as much as the constitution. A day full of youth parades and all the ice cream children – and, no doubt, their parents – can eat.

There's plenty of hot dogs and cake on offer, too. Sounds like my kind of holiday.

It's been six years since we celebrated Norway's national day together here in Hong Kong. As we move into the post-pandemic economy, I'm hopeful that our two economies, our two communities, can build on our good ties and goodwill.

After all the challenging times, I can confidently say that Hong Kong now shines brighter than ever.

Our formula of success, the “one country, two systems” principle, will be here to stay in the long run. It is a solemn commitment of our country, China. The unique advantages that have made Hong Kong what it is today will continue to be the core character of this city.

Hong Kong continues to stand as the trusted gateway to connect the Chinese Mainland and the world; a platform which international businesses can leverage for convenient access to the Mainland and Asian markets.

Apart from being Asian's international financial centre, we are also

driving our innovation and technology development through targeted policies. Our efforts include attracting strategic enterprises worldwide to establish a presence here, and expediting collaboration with sister cities in the Greater Bay Area, particularly Shenzhen.

I trust Hong Kong can create business opportunities for Norwegian companies – and a flourishing future for us all.

On this, I would like to highlight one specific area, which I believe our co-operation is with promising prospect.

Our country has given us the “eight centres” role in the National 14th Five-year Plan, and that includes building Hong Kong as an international maritime centre. In that regard, we released an Action Plan on Maritime and Port Development Strategy last December. And strengthening high-value-added maritime services, enlarging the maritime network, and grooming talent are among our priority tasks.

Hong Kong is now home to over 1 100 port and maritime-related companies. They provide a wide range of high-value-added maritime services. In the field of marine insurance, for instance, 11 out of the 12 members of the International Group of Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Clubs have established a presence in Hong Kong. Among them are the Norwegian-based Gard and Skuld P&I Clubs, which have been operating in Hong Kong for decades. Norway's DNV (Det Norske Veritas), the world's largest classification society for vessels in terms of gross tonnage, has also maintained a longstanding presence in the city.

Norway is certainly a superpower on the seas, and owns one of the world's largest merchant fleets. You have one of the world's most comprehensive maritime industry clusters. For maritime services, there are many areas where we can collaborate.

One such area is the decarbonisation of vessels and the entire maritime value chain, as we collectively strive to achieve net zero targets. We can also foster partnerships on maritime talent development and manpower training. For instance, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University is well recognised in this area. It has established a joint degree programme with the Copenhagen Business School.

And, let me add, our co-operation could extend well into the cultural sphere.

I understand that the Norwegian city of Bodø, just north of the Arctic Circle, is one of this year's three European Capitals of Culture. Bodø's theme is “Arcticulation,” with more than 1 000 events being held there and throughout the surrounding region of Nordland.

Perhaps a mini-Arcticulation festival would find an enthusiastic audience in Hong Kong.

Or, collaboration between our West Kowloon Cultural District and Oslo's Munch Museum, which is home to the world famous painting of

In short, from trade to business, from the economy to culture, and others, the room for co-operation is vast.

Ambassador, ladies and gentlemen, my congratulations to your Constitution Day, and our best wishes to the enduring good relationship between Hong Kong and Norway.

