

Speech by SCST at Europe Day Opening Ceremony (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, at the Europe Day Opening Ceremony today (May 10):

Ambassador Harvey Rouse, Head of the EU (European Union) Office to Hong Kong and Macao, Consuls General (of European Union Member States), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, dear French little friends over there,

Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to join you at the opening of Europe Day Festival. And actually indeed, thank you very much for the support that I have got from different Consuls General ever since my appointment to the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism. I have actually seen quite a number of you over different events in the last five months.

On today's special occasion, I would like to highlight the pivotal role Hong Kong plays as an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. Hong Kong has deep-rooted cultural origin and bond from the Mainland of China, but we also have for decades cultivated strong cultural ties with foreign countries, including the European Union (EU) and its member states. Through regular exchanges, we have built a solid foundation of mutual understanding and collaboration. I am most delighted to learn from Ambassador Rouse that our local artists, Opera Hong Kong, will be performing "The Story of Carmen", a classic European Opera, at today's Festival. In fact, Carmen, was also performed at our Hong Kong Arts Festival earlier this year and I was one of the audience enjoying it. This is an example of how we can bring talent and tradition from different parts of the world, showcasing our efforts and achievements in promoting cultural exchange and collaboration.

Hong Kong will continue to leverage our distinct institutional strengths under "one country, two systems" to "bring in" diverse cultures from around the world while enabling Chinese culture to "go global".

Hong Kong's creative industries are now economic drivers for our economy. The Greater Bay Area Development and the Belt and Road Initiative provide unprecedented opportunities for our creative talents to shine on the global stage. By working closely with EU member states, we aim to unlock even greater potential for cultural exchanges and economic growth. Thank you very much for having our local Hong Kong artist to do the backdrop named after this meaningful event.

Sports is another area under my portfolio that is full of exciting opportunities. The Kai Tak Sports Park, Hong Kong's largest-ever sports infrastructure, was officially commissioned in March this year. I am sure many of you were among the first to enjoy our signature rugby event, Hong Kong Sevens, at this state-of-the-art stadium in end March. Building on that success, we hosted mega international and local concerts in April, each drawing over 40 000 fans per show. And I believe quite a number of you were

there for the Coldplay concert either. We have another series of concerts this weekend as well called Mayday from Taiwan, who is also performing in Hong Kong and they pledged to come back every May to perform here. We will fully utilise the opportunities that this new venue present to Hong Kong and stage more mega sports events and competitions for the enjoyment of all. And of course, larger venue means larger parties. As some of you may know, we will soon welcome international football club teams to play at both the Hong Kong Stadium and the Kai Tak Stadium in end May and late July, featuring Manchester United versus Hong Kong, China Representative Team, Liverpool versus AC Milan from Italy, as well as Arsenal versus Tottenham Hotspur. To sports fans from around the world and particularly the European Union – please stay tuned for more exciting sports events in Hong Kong later this year. Through these sporting events, my bureau will continue our efforts in fostering greater passion for sports.

On tourism, leveraging the robust foundation built over the years, we aspire to further consolidate Hong Kong's position as a premier world-class tourism destination. With the concerted efforts of the Government and industry players, we witness a strong comeback of our tourism industry after the pandemic. In the first four months of 2025, we welcomed a total of 16 million visitors, representing an increase by 1.2 times as compared to the same period in 2023 when Hong Kong started to resume normal travel. The rebound is particularly strong among visitors from the European Union, which register a surge by 1.4 times compared to 2023. Quoting the Labour Day Golden Week as another example, we recorded a total of around 1.1 million inbound visitors to Hong Kong, among which the number of non-Mainland visitors was around 180 000, representing a year-on-year increase of about 31 per cent. These underscore the resilience of our tourism industry and Hong Kong's enduring appeal as a world-class travel destination. To ensure continued growth, the Government promulgated the Development Blueprint for Hong Kong's Tourism Industry 2.0 last December, setting out our vision and mission over the next five years. With the steadfast support and contribution of our industry partners, I am confident that we will reach new heights on tourism in the years to come.

Before I close, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the European Union for organising this wonderful event of Europe Day and subsequent events as outlined by Ambassador Rouse just now. I wish it every success and everyone an enjoyable time. Thank you.