

Speech by PSHA at Business Luncheon hosted by Berlin ETO in Vienna (English only)

Following is the speech by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Carrie Yau, at the Business Luncheon hosted by Berlin ETO in Vienna (October 16):

Director-General Helmut Moser, Consul Jia, Mr Wolfgang Waldner, Mr Frederich Bauer, Mr Gerhard Erdpresser, distinguished guests, friends, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here in Vienna. My last visit was in 2006 when I came to celebrate the 250th birthday of Mozart and enjoy the paintings of Klimt. Vienna is a destination for music lovers and visual art admirers. Indeed Vienna is a cultural capital of the longest history in Europe.

Our Economic and Trade Office (ETO) in Berlin has organised this luncheon for us. The Berlin ETO is our newest overseas trade office to strengthen economic and cultural ties between Hong Kong and Austria as well as with your neighbours in this part of the world. I thank the ETO for doing a very good job today. It is great to see so many of you here from different sectors of the Austrian community.

On this occasion, I have specially come to thank you all for being friends and fans of Hong Kong throughout the years. Over the years, Austria has brought us exciting designs, world-class cuisine, famous brands and a slice of Austrian culture. We certainly would welcome even more creative talents from your country to live and work in Hong Kong.

Ladies and gentlemen, we like to call Hong Kong, Asia's world city. The beating heart of any world city is a world-class arts and cultural scene. And I am sure you may testify this right here in Vienna.

So how do we turn Hong Kong into a distinctive cultural capital? Our location at the heart of Asia and on the southeastern tip of China provides access to a huge audience for performing arts throughout the region. Last year we welcomed more than 29 million visitors, over four times our population of seven million. As with tourists the world over, they like to shop, eat out, take in a show and experience the local culture.

Hong Kong is an international city, with a cultural fusion of east and west. We have a well-educated, sophisticated and multi-cultural society. To promote the sharing of knowledge and creativity, and to open minds to new ideas, we cherish the free flow of news and information in an unfettered media environment.

All of this has helped to establish Hong Kong as a vibrant international business hub in Asia. Companies from all over the world, including Austrian companies, enjoy the benefit of our simple and low tax system. We enjoy the free flow of capital and goods, have a tried and trusted legal system, and have zero tolerance of corruption.

Earlier this week in his annual Policy Address, Chief Executive of the HKSAR highlighted the importance of promoting creative and cultural industries in Hong Kong. In fact, we have recently identified this area as having potential to become one of our key industries alongside our traditional strengths of financial services, tourism, trade and logistics and professional services.

Each year the Government allocates some 240 million Euros [HK\$2.7 billion] for cultural and arts development. That is more than one percent of our total annual spending. It may surprise you that, for a city known for towering skyscrapers, international banks and bustling shopping districts, our single largest and most ambitious project is all about arts and culture. And this is where we want you to get involved. We are developing a massive cultural district on a prime harbourfront site. The West Kowloon Cultural District, or WKCD, will be an integrated arts facility spanning 40 hectares. A fully furnished oasis for the arts, and a platform for local and overseas artists to showcase their talents and communicate and inspire each other.

The government has already committed an upfront endowment of almost 2 billion Euros [HK\$21.6 billion] to implement the project. It is a strategic investment for our future generation and the future of Hong Kong. When started commissioning in 2015, the WKCD will include various performing arts venues, including a mega performance venue, theatres, concert halls and music halls. There will also be a forward looking contemporary art museum called M+ and outdoor piazzas for people to enjoy the atmosphere. The WKCD will blend global cosmopolitan culture with local heritage; connect with people around the globe. Its important mission is to bring arts to the people and people to the arts.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the project is that we are starting from a blank page. In July this year, we appointed three internationally renowned master planner teams to design an

overall layout of the WKCD. This will be put to a public consultation before a final plan is chosen. After the masterplan, then there will be architectural competition for designing some of the individual venues as iconic buildings.

Now is exactly the time we need input from places such as Vienna that has a wealth of experience and talent in all aspects of arts and culture. Ideas and inspiration from this great city will help establish the finest cultural hub for people in Hong Kong, Asia and around the world to enjoy and cherish. One notable example is certainly the famous MuseumsQuartier in Vienna. It is one of the world's largest and most renowned cultural complexes which attract more than one million visitors per year. It is also certainly an exemplary model to which we can make reference when planning for the WKCD project. I feel very excited about my visit to MuseumsQuartier after the luncheon, thanks to the kind arrangement by Dr. Waldner, who is also with us here.

In fact, the WKCD Authority, the statutory body set up to implement the project is recruiting globally top-tier staff to plan and develop the WKCD. If you are interested, apply to join the WKCD Authority which may prove to be the most direct way to instill your aspirations in the project.

It is one thing to build iconic arts venues, while it is quite another to nurture an arts culture in the community.

One exciting new initiative is taking place as I speak. In Hong Kong, we have designated this month as "Creative October" to promote creativity, arts and culture in our community. There are 40 programmes and 200 activities this month alone covering performing arts, visual arts, workshops, Cantonese opera and much more. Indeed, our Hong Kong Arts Centre will be holding in this month screenings of the winners of the 2007 and 2008 Prix Ars Electronica, a name that must sound familiar to Austrian media art lovers.

The "Creative October" initiative complements our campaign to raise awareness and appreciation of arts and culture particularly among our young people. Schools are being encouraged to provide more opportunities for students to get involved in performing arts as part of their all-round education and development.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are confident that Hong Kong has what it takes to be a cultural capital in Asia. We have the location, the talent and determination to achieve our goals for

creative and cultural industries. In the WKCD we also have arguably the most ambitious single arts development project in the world to look forward to in the years ahead.

hope you will join hands with Hong Kong as we embark on this exciting journey for arts and culture. It is also a good reason to come and visit us and see for yourselves the tremendous opportunities and potential for arts and culture in Asia's world city. It is our dream to model on the success of Vienna and one day brand ourselves as "Vienna of the East". Right now Opera Hong Kong is staging Mozart's "Magic Flute" in Hong Kong and soon in Beijing. Mozart remains magical after 250 years not only in the West but in the East.

Now, we will be showing you a video introducing the WKCD project. Enjoy. Thank you and have a great day.

Ends/Friday, October 16, 2009

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