

Speech by PSHA at Opening Concert of Hong Kong 2011 International a cappella Festival (English only)

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Following is the speech delivered by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Raymond Young, today (March 26) at the Opening Concert of the Hong Kong 2011 International a cappella Festival:

Dr Wong, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honour to take part in this opening concert of the 2011 International a capella Festival. A cappella is a uniquely demanding art form as it requires the best from the performers. Without any musical accompaniment, singers are literally left to their own devices, which are their own natural voices. On top of individual talent, a capella singing requires seamless teamwork from all performers as every wrong note or missed beat will affect the whole team. So it is always a joy to watch an a capella performance and I thank the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (the Federation) for their sustained efforts in promoting this art form in Hong Kong, and for organising this event. It provides an excellent opportunity for local and overseas artists to share the stage and I am sure these young artists have learnt a lot from one another and had a lot of fun practising together.

To those who don't know Hong Kong very well, I should say to them that Hong Kong is not only about making money and shopping, but we do have a very vibrant arts scene here, and we are steadily on our way to becoming a cultural centre of regional significance in this part of the world. The Government is planning a cultural project of a mega scale - the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) - with 15 new world-class performing venues. This project is ambitious to say the least. But the most challenging part of the project is not building the facilities and hardware, but building the software that operates them. What we need is the right people. People like yourselves, the young artists here tonight who have a passion for the arts. Without the performers - and an audience who can appreciate them - the WKCD project will be no more than bricks and mortar.

Therefore a clear focus in the Government's cultural policy now is to grow our audience base, nurture arts appreciation in the community, and step up arts education. The Federation has been a great partner of the Government in youth work, and is now my new-found partner in arts promotion. I applaud their strategy of making use of music and the arts to more effectively achieve the goals of youth

development.

Lastly, I would like to thank Dr Wong and the Federation for bringing together such a wonderful programme tonight, and also a big thank you to the sponsors and supporters for their contributions to the festival. I wish you all an enjoyable and memorable evening.

Thank you.

Ends/Saturday, March 26, 2011

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