

Keynote speech by Mr. CY Leung, GBM, GBS, JP, Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, at the China Daily Greater Bay Area Conference – “GBA: The Way Forward” held on 18 November 2020 (English only)

Chief Executive Mrs Lam, Deputy Director Tan Tia-niu, your Excellencies, Mr Zhou Shu-chun, Mr Zhou Li, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I am very pleased to be back at this annual Greater Bay Area Conference. In the past year, despite the interruptions by the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen preparations for the implementation of the Greater Bay Area as a national strategic development plan taking shape.

First, at the 5th plenary session of the 19th Chinese Communist Party Central Committee held less than 3 weeks ago, proposals for the formulation of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long Range Objectives Through the year 2035 was adopted. The proposals support the better integration of Hong Kong and Macao into the Country's overall development, and develop the Greater Bay Area to a region of high quality. The proposals also highlight the support for the development of the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions into international innovation and technology centres. The key word here is “international”.

Added to this background of the Proposals is the promulgation of a new and exciting mission for the development of Shenzhen which was revealed about a month ago. Shenzhen, a city with the largest total GDP among the Mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area and also the closest to Hong Kong in more ways than one, celebrated the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Special Economic Zone. At the gathering, President Xi delivered an address of landmark significance, and called for, among other things, efforts to synergize economic rules and mechanisms in the Greater Bay Area, and wider exchanges and deeper integration among young people in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao to strengthen their sense of belonging to the motherland.

Preceding the gathering was the release of the implementation plan for Shenzhen to pioneer comprehensive reforms between 2020 and 2025. This is a document of 5,000 plus words which is already a highly condensed version of the original plan. Anyone

who takes an interest in the future development of Hong Kong and therefore that of Shenzhen and the Greater Bay Area as a whole will be well advised to study in detail this implementation plan of Shenzhen.

Now that we have the proposals for the formulation of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Long range Objectives Through the year 2035, and soon the 14th Five-Year Plan itself, the strategic plan for the Greater Bay Area and the implementation plan of Shenzhen, it is time that we prepare the way forward for Hong Kong in this exciting region. I see three parts to this preparation. First is research to give us the most comprehensive and factual understanding of the latest developments and policy promulgations in all the sectors and in all the cities in the Greater Bay Area so that we can cast aside old impressions, outdated information and prejudices and come to grips with the opportunities, the realities and the challenges. We should know not just the whats, where and who, but also the whys. Second is messaging – to broadcast the results of the research findings to all and sundry in Hong Kong, comprehensively, effectively and objectively, so that all in Hong Kong have the same facts and understanding. Third is community engagement – to prompt the various sectors in Hong Kong into actions, such as schools, professional bodies, trades and industries and the investment communities etc. In so doing, we should aim to change mindsets and attitudes. Being the most international city and the super-connector in the Greater Bay Area, Hong Kong should also take upon itself the task of engaging the international community, fulfilling its function to also build an international innovation and technology centre, among other things.

The collaboration between Hong Kong and other Great Bay Area cities can definitely cut across sectors. We can of course have say scientist to scientist collaboration, but we can also facilitate for example collaboration between Mainland scientists and Hong Kong investors, who can bring new capital to laboratories and startups to launch and upscale production for larger market shares in shorter time frames. We should also facilitate direct G2B (government to business) contacts, broadening such contacts and intensifying relationships between municipal governments of the Mainland cities and Hong Kong businesses.

In the next few months, we should not allow Covid-19 to stand in the way of these preparations, whether research, messaging or community engagement, or indeed any collaboration between the two sides of the Shenzhen River.

The new world of Hong Kong is without a shred of doubt in the Greater Bay Area. It is an exciting new world in the new era. This new world will give Hong Kong an unparalleled opportunity to fulfill the expectations of President Xi when he received the Hong Kong and Macao delegation in Beijing in November 2018 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Country's reforms and opening up. President Xi told the delegation he expected Hong Kong, and Macao, to more diligently and proactively assist in the complete opening up of the Country, fully integrate into the overall development of the Country and taking part in the implementation of the Country's management. The Greater Bay Area will be a perfect stage on which Hong Kong will continue to perform and perform well.

Thank you.

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