

**CLOSING REMARKS BY
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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION**

Ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a challenge for me to speak after this interesting session of popular culture as our iconic idols so eloquently walk us through the art and science of making stars and crossing boundaries.

I took up the post of Secretary for Home Affairs 25 days ago. These have been very eventful days, not the least the past four, as I took part in the fifth Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum which gave me the opportunity to meet so many friends from across the miles and those closer to home.

Thanks to the support of our partners, over the years the ACCF has matured into a signature event in the cultural calendar in this part of the world. I must thank my predecessor, Dr Patrick Ho, for masterminding this initiative five years ago. The ACCF has been bringing together, on a regular basis, leading government officials as well as non-government cultural leaders from the mainland of China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, for discussions and exchanges on various topical cultural themes.

A quick stocktake will see that we have, over these years, traversed the full spectrum of agenda items from the more down to earth themes of "Brand Asia", "Creative Asia" to the more philosophical themes like last year's "Asia Arts Culture and Modernity" and this year's "Culture Coming Home".

As we worked on the themes together with our partners in Asia, we have enhanced our mutual understanding and built a good foundation for closer collaboration in arenas outside this forum. This multiplier effect is indeed what we hoped to see.

Locally, the forum has also enabled us to work more closely with the local and international arts and cultural sector as we engage them to be our co-organisers of open forums. This engagement model should speak for itself our commitment to the policy principles of people-oriented pluralism, freedom of expression, holistic approach, partnership and community driven.

Indeed, without our partner organisations, which include the World Alliance of Arts Education, the Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture, the Hong Kong Institute of Architects, the Hong Kong Institute of Engineers, the Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects, the Hong Kong Institute of Planners, the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors, the Chinese Civilisations Centre of the University of Hong Kong, the Centre for Cultural Policy Research of the University of Hong Kong, the programme this year could never have been as interesting as it has been. And it is precisely this engagement model which we shall continue to adopt in our future work on the cultural forefront.

Before the curtain falls on the forum this year, I wish to add that as we prepare for the West Kowloon cultural district, the largest commitment we have so far on the books for culture in Hong Kong, we shall redouble our efforts to listen to the views of our community on their vision for the future of culture and the arts in Hong Kong.

Investment in the culture and the arts is not to be interpreted as an investment in the arts sector. It is an investment in the community and for the community, much as investment in education, social welfare and healthcare.

In the run-up to West Kowloon, we shall be dedicating more resources to build our cultural fabric, both within Hong Kong and through more active cultural exchange activities with our ACCF partners and the rest of the world.

For that matter, I'm sure we shall be meeting up on different occasions soon, before the next ACCF. Thank you.