

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

Ladies and gentleman, over the past two days in our official meetings we have engaged in lively debate on various aspects pertaining to the theme of this year's Asian Cultural Cooperation Forum, namely the all embracing topic of "Culture Coming Home"; and by "coming home" we mean culture returning to their roots with distinct characteristics. We have discussed cultural harmony, cultural exchange, Asian modernity and culture diversity. Through such exchanges we have come to recognise, perhaps more forcibly than before, the importance of protecting and enhancing our unique Asian cultural distinctions against the ever-encroaching tide of globalisation. Of course it was Kipling who said, "East is East and West is West and ne'er the twain shall meet". He was perceptive enough in stressing this distinction, but failed to foresee that the two do meet, colossally and with considerable consequences. But the ongoing meeting of east and west need not be a contest and should certainly never be reduced to a choice of "either/or". Each hemisphere has much to contribute to an equal alliance provided we both retain our own perspectives. There is as much richness and diversity here in Asia as one can find in, say, Western Europe, which many acknowledge as the cradle of industrialisation and modernisation. So what is to prevent us from defending our own distinctive attributes against those which have come figuratively speaking "knocking at our doors"? Our greatest danger lies in resignation; in accepting that global uniformity as inevitable. It is not inevitable, and we have to sound the wake up call to convince our respective populations that our core traditions, our intrinsic Asian values, are not only worthy of preservation but vital to our ethos. So the debate does not stop here. It is our duty once this particular forum comes to a close to take it out into the public arena, bringing it home with us to our respective populations, and endeavouring by every means to engage our peoples in the discussion of how best to protect our cultural heritage.

Public engagement plays an absolutely fundamental role in promoting culture. Our goal is to promote cultural activities and build a society with sufficient cultural depth. Hence, as in the past, local and international arts organisations have been invited this year again as our partners to organise a series of open forums. We believe that these will give us greater insights into the four particular topics touched upon in the course of our dialog, namely a World Creativity Summit, Living Urban Heritage, Cultural Core Values, and Chinese Modernity and Popular Culture. I personally anticipate that the outcome of our collective endeavours will enable us to better identify the challenges ahead and the ways and means to tackle that.

I thank all of you present here today, as well as all parties who have contributed to these fruitful discussions. Thanks.