

**Chinese New Year Reception in Hamburg
12 February 2014**

Welcome Remarks by Ivan K B Lee

Director,

Hong Kong Economic and Trade Affairs (Central and Eastern Europe)

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Mr Herms, Consul General Yang (楊惠群總領事), Stephen, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very warm welcome to our traditional reception to celebrate the Chinese New Year. I always love to be here, because there are many similarities between Hamburg and Hong Kong. We both have a beautiful harbour, and we both are a trading and logistic hub in our respective region.

2. Hong Kong continues to benefit from our role as the “super-connector” between China and the rest of the world. The real GDP growth in 2013 is estimated to be around 3%, and we expect a better growth this year. This year is the Year of the Horse. In Chinese culture, horse is equated with speed, power, elegance and endurance. The Horse gives you a ride to your destination, so it is also a symbol of speedy success. If you have not already done so, this year offers good opportunities to think of using Hong Kong as the gateway to expand into the fast growing Asian markets.

3. Under the “One Country, Two Systems” arrangement, we have consolidated our fundamental strengths, like the rule of law underpinned by an independent judiciary, a business-friendly environment, a stable and freely convertible currency, free flow of information and capital, and a low and simple tax system. Being the world’s freest economy, as ranked by the Heritage Foundation for 20 years in a row, we remain committed to trade liberation and maintaining a level playing field for all companies.

4. German companies can take advantage of Hong Kong’s platform as an international financial centre. Our stock market is the second largest in Asia and the six largest in the world. Last year, we came second only after New York in terms of funds raised through initial public offering. We also remain the world’s premier offshore Renminbi business centre and host the largest pool of Renminbi-denominated deposits outside of China. We provide the ideal platform for enterprises and financial institutions from all over the world to carry out Renminbi payments, financing and investments.

5. German companies domiciled in Hong Kong can also benefit from the liberalisation and preferential measures under our free trade pact with Mainland China, the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement.

6. Hong Kong is also a magnet for tourists. Last year, we received over 54 million visitors. Among them, over 40 million are from Mainland China. And they come to shop because there is no value-added tax. Many famous brands have their flagship stores in Hong Kong. Our booming tourism makes us a perfect platform for German companies to showcase your products with the “Made in Germany” quality mark, because you can reach a wide audience in our part of the world.

7. As a city which never stops, Hong Kong is also investing in several major infrastructure projects which will provide a solid platform to propel our future development and to improve the quality of life for its residents. The Express Rail Link, a high speed rail connection between Hong Kong and Mainland China, is scheduled to complete in 2015; and the bridge linking Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macau in 2016.

8. Let me conclude by wishing you and your family members two traditional Chinese New Year greetings related to horses: 龍馬精神, to be as healthy as a horse; and 馬到功成, to gallop to your destination for a speedy success in all your endeavours in the coming year. Thank you.