

Press Release

Hong Kong hosts annual reception in Bern

To celebrate the 17th anniversary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and promote Swiss-Hong Kong bilateral ties, the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin (HKETO Berlin) organised an annual reception in Bern on 12 June.

In his welcoming remarks, Director of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Affairs (Central and Eastern Europe), Mr Ivan K B Lee, underlined the successful implementation of the “One Country, Two Systems” arrangement in Hong Kong since its reunification with China, “We maintain our position as the world’s freest economy as ranked by the Heritage Foundation for the past 20 years, the second easiest place to do business according to the World Bank, and the third most competitive economy according to the International Institute for Management Development. All these highlight the successful implementation of the “One Country, Two Systems” arrangement.”

Mr Lee also stressed that thanks to Hong Kong’s enviable geopolitical position as the super-connector between China and the rest of the world, the city has benefitted from the above-average growth in the region, adding that “Swiss companies using Hong Kong as the gateway to China and the whole of Asia can reap these benefits, as well as those offered by the liberalisation measures under our own free trade pact with Mainland China, the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement, or CEPA”.

Bilateral ties between Switzerland and Hong Kong have remained strong. Mr Lee stated, “Switzerland remains one of our major trading partners in the world and our third largest in Europe, and our total bilateral trade exceeded USD 13 billion in 2013.” “The overall trend has been highly positive, with an impressive average annual growth rate of 16.7% over the last five years. We see great potential for further growth”, he added.

Mr Lee also made reference to Art Basel Hong Kong to demonstrate that closer Swiss-Hong Kong collaboration can go beyond economic and trade matters, “At the inaugural Art Basel Hong Kong in May 2013, half of the galleries came from Asia and the Asia-Pacific region. The second Art Basel Hong Kong was concluded less than a month ago with similar success, featuring 245 leading galleries from 39 countries and territories around the globe attracting more than 65,000 visitors”.

The success of Art Basel Hong Kong is complemented by the fact that Hong Kong’s arts and cultural scene is fast expanding, both in terms of

Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin

Address:
Jägerstrasse 33, 10117, Berlin

Telephone:
+49 (0) 30 22 66 77 236

Fax:
+49 (0) 30 22 66 77 288

E-mail:
enrico_schaefer@hketoberlin.gov.hk

Website: www.hketoberlin.gov.hk



software and hardware. In this connection, Mr Lee encouraged Switzerland's creative talents to explore the many unique opportunities that Hong Kong has to offer.

About 60 guests joined the reception, among them senior officials from the Swiss government including Ambassador Christian Etter, Head of Special Foreign Economic Service, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and Mr Wu Jie, Charge D'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Switzerland, as well as senior officials of the federal government, the business community, academia, and the media.

About Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin

HKETO Berlin is the official HKSAR Government representative in commercial relations and other economic and trade matters in Switzerland, as well as Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic, and Slovenia.

Photo Captions

1. Mr Ivan K B Lee, Director, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Affairs (Central and Eastern Europe) presenting a souvenir to Ambassador Christian Etter, Head of Special Foreign Economic Service, SECO
2. Officiating guests proposing a toast at the reception: (from left) Mr Wu Jie, Charge D'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Switzerland; Mr Ivan K B Lee; and Ambassador Christian Etter

Contact

Enrico Schaefer
Commercial and Public Relations Officer
Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Berlin
Tel: +49 (0) 30 22 66 77 23 6
Fax: +49 (0) 30 22 66 77 28 8
E-mail: enrico_schaefer@hketoberlin.gov.hk

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