

Allocution de Mme Conway-Mouret
Ministre déléguée chargée des français de l'étranger
Commémoration du 150ème anniversaire de la présence française à
Hong Kong
Hong Kong – 5 octobre 2012

Honourable Chief Secretary for Administration,
Before we start our ceremony, I want to tell you our deep sorrow on the tragic shipping accident that happened on October 1st. As a sign of respect and compassion for the victims and their families, I want to invite you all to a minute of silence.

Honourable Chief Secretary for Administration,
Honourable Secretary for Education,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Chers amis,

Under those difficult circumstances, I want to reaffirm the support of the French government to the Hong Kong government and emphasize how much France values Hong Kong as a friend and a partner.

I am very honoured to be hosted in your magnificent residence. Thank you very much for welcoming this celebration of the 150 years of friendship between France and Hong Kong.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the first member of the new government of France to visit Hong Kong, I'm happy to tell you that relations between France and Hong Kong have never been as strong as they are today. This is obviously true in the economic sector, as Hong Kong is the second biggest trade surplus in the world for France and is home to more than 700 French companies, employing 30 000 people. Our economic relations are thriving, but we can still do more. In this regard, we are working together to strengthen financial cooperation and to boost both ways investments.

The world economic situation faces great challenges. In that context, the European Union and its companies are adapting and showing great resilience in facing up to the crisis head-on. The EU has the biggest economy in the world, it accounts for one fourth of the world GDP, it hosts one third of the 500 world biggest corporations and is, by far, the largest trading partner of China and the largest trading power in the world.

European leaders have agreed on measures to boost economic growth, to settle mechanisms for maintaining financial stability, to strengthen banking and budgetary integration and to rebalance public accounts in order to rebuild confidence. The coming European summit on October 18th and 19th will reinforce the commitments towards sustainable solutions for the European economy.

Trade aside, France enjoys very strong cooperation with Hong Kong in the fields of education, science and culture. The French May arts festival keeps growing and reaching new audiences every year, bringing its contribution to the development of Hong Kong as a major art hub.

Honourable Secretary for education, as we discussed this afternoon, I

am convinced that developing higher education exchange programs, helping our young people to know each other, exploring together new ways of fostering innovation and scientific progress, are priorities for us for a shared future together.

The dynamism of our relationship is not new, as the book we are launching today recalls, spanning the period from the assignment of the first consul of France in Hong Kong to today. With the support of our Consulate, the English version entitled “Hong Kong, French connections” will be soon available and the French version “Hong Kong, Présences françaises” is available already today. As a sign of the importance of this 150-years-long history, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Mr CY Leung, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, Mr Laurent Fabius, have prefaced the book.

Many people have contributed to this book, but let me pay a special tribute to the remarkable work done by the young historian François Drémeaux, who led the editorial work, as well as to the members of the editorial committee. Allow me also to thank the generous sponsors who made this project possible.

This long history of 150 years is full of common adventures and colourful anecdotes, but above all, what is striking in this history is the importance of human dimension. French women and men who decided to try their luck in Hong Kong and sometimes made Hong Kong their home, those business people, diplomats, writers, scientists, sailors, all contributed to building bridges between France and Hong Kong. Today, the French community in Hong Kong, which is one of the largest in an Asian city with more than 15 000 members, includes obviously less sailors and adventurers and more bankers, business people and families. But they

still share with the pioneers of France-Hong Kong relations the same sense of entrepreneurship, dynamism and intellectual curiosity.

This book is also a warm tribute paid to the people of Hong Kong and to this multifaceted and amazing city that continues today as it did in the past, to fascinate observers by its capacity to constantly adapt to the impressive transformations that Asia and China in particular are experiencing.

Honourable Chief Secretary,

I'm very pleased to present you with the first copy of this book.

Let me express the wish that French and Hong Kong people will continue to grow closer together and build a prosperous and inclusive future together, benefiting from 150 years of friendship and driven by the same sense of initiative, creativity and solidarity./.