

Speech by Commissioner for Tourism at the Opening Ceremony of Music Matters,
The Asia Pacific Music Forum (English only)

Following is a speech by the Commissioner for Tourism, Miss Au King-chi, at the Opening Ceremony of Music Matters, The Asia Pacific Music Forum today (June 4):

Mr. Donat, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good Morning,

I am delighted to join so many leaders from the music and entertainment industry for the opening of this year's Music Matters Asia. A warm welcome to you all, especially those who have come from overseas to be here. Hong Kong is honoured to host this regional music forum. In just three years, Music Matters Asia has emerged as a must-attend event on the entertainment industry's calendar. It is a platform for members of the music world to bounce around new ideas and explore opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration.

Some people say that Hong Kong has migrated from a cultural desert to a cultural jungle. We are certainly no longer a cultural desert, but a cultural jungle – you will have to make up your own minds.

I assure you we value freedom of expression, and practice it enthusiastically. We recognise creativity, and protect it. We encourage diversity, and explore its potential. You can experience such diversity throughout Hong Kong, in our shopping malls, restaurants, and leisure pursuits. It is perhaps most evident in our cinemas, theatres and in the music we produce and listen to.

Music really does matter to Hong Kong. Our music industry has long been at the forefront of cultural creativity in Hong Kong. Many people find it is an integral part of city life. From original canto-pop to Chinese opera, from classical to modern jazz, folk songs to rock music, country to hip-hop, there is something for everyone in Hong Kong, whatever your taste. It is part of why we like to call Hong Kong, 'Asia's world city'.

People from all over the globe have made Hong Kong their home-away-from-home for more than a century. So much so that we have become a melting pot of eastern and western cultures. Part of the reason is accessibility. As an aviation hub in the heart of East Asia, we are within easy reach of virtually all the major cities in Asia. That makes Hong Kong a popular short-haul tourist destination for visitors from around the region and especially from Mainland China. Add to the mix state-of-the-art IT and telecommunications infrastructure, world-class hospitality and a community that is eager for the latest trends and you have an ideal platform on which music and entertainment can flourish.

The government is firmly committed to promoting Hong Kong's music and entertainment industry in a free and open environment. It is a great way to encourage innovation and creativity. It also enriches people's lives and attracts more talent to the city so that our business community can continue to thrive. At the same time we have to make sure that you, the industry professionals, are rewarded for your creativity and dedication. We are working hard to protect intellectual property rights through a comprehensive legal framework. To back this up with robust enforcement, we will continue to work with the industry to raise awareness of intellectual property rights and crackdown on those who abuse the latest technology at the expense of entertainment professionals.

We are also firming up plans to build a mega cultural and entertainment centre on the Kowloon waterfront. By creating a world-class cultural district, we aim to attract talent and entertainment professionals as well as tourists from all over the world. The 40-hectare site in West Kowloon will be home to a variety of performing arts, galleries and museums as well as commercial enterprises.

We will include more music and cultural experiences in itineraries for our visitors to enrich their experience in Hong Kong. The Tourism Commission is bringing together performing arts groups and the travel trade to better promote our arts and cultural events to visitors. In collaboration with the Hong Kong Tourism Board, we are upgrading our online marketing platform, and enhancing the user-friendliness of the existing online ticketing system. Our shows are indeed just a click away on screen.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am confident this forum will help to stimulate new ideas so that the music and entertainment industry in Asia can continue to go from strength to strength. I also hope you will be able to take some time during this forum to experience the unique Hong Kong lifestyle for yourselves. Whether you like to explore the old back streets or the latest in modernity, I am sure you will not be disappointed.

It just remains for me to wish you all a successful Asia Pacific Music Forum and an enjoyable stay in Hong Kong.

Thank you.

Ends/Wednesday, June 4, 2008