

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects Belt and Road Forum 2021
HKIA President Ar. Donald Choi
Opening Remark — 16 April 2021

Mrs Carrie Lam, Chairman KK Chan, President Rita Soh, President Xiu Long, Distinguished Guests and Participants, fellow architects, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all on behalf of The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA), the organiser of this significant Belt and Road Forum 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Forum is being conducted in the hybrid mode of onsite cum online. Yet, that doesn't take away its significance, as evident by the honourable in-person presence of The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Mrs Lam, as well as heads and experts from prestigious international, regional, and our nation's architectural professional bodies. In fact, the online prong of participation has helped us extending the Forum further and wider — on top of the around 100 onsite attendants for the two-day Forum, we have about 350 registered participants from 13 regions and countries.

It is the eighth year since China launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), an ambitious “project of the century”, as cited by President Xi Jinping, that embraces more than 60 countries, accounting for over one third of global economic value. The impact of the multi-facet multi-lateral developments across the BRI region, many having been embarked on in the past years and certainly more are in the pipeline, will drive global developments for at least the next two to three decades. Over such a long haul, the challenges posted by the pandemic appears manageable. In fact, in last year, China's investment in new infrastructure projects across Southeast Asia continues to grow, and Chinese leaders have pledged that the vision of infrastructure stretching from East Asia to Europe will not change due to the epidemic.

I am confident that architects, who carry the DNA of being creative, adaptive to change, and being trained to play the roles of leaders and collaborators in various projects, would also be able to cope with the post-pandemic challenges. The rich experience and expertise in managing architecture and infrastructure projects from concept to detailed design, as well as efficient execution, have also gained Hong Kong architects international recognition. Moreover, none would dispute that Hong Kong architectural professionals are among the pioneers for excellent design for high-rise high-density urban built environment.

Given the above strengths, Hong Kong architects are no strangers to many BRI countries/regions, having participated in the many infrastructure construction building projects not just in the past eight years, but over the past decades. You can witness some of the prominent ones located from China, Southeast Asia, Africa, to Middle East being displayed in the exhibition panels here onsite. The projects will also be displayed virtually in our Forum website.

Yet, this Forum aims way above just showing off our achievements. Instead, under the theme of “Retrospect and Prospect of Belt and Road Construction Projects”, HKIA aims to duly play its role of being a “super-connector” and “facilitator” — just like the role well taken up by Hong Kong in BRI. We hope to construct a platform to connect local and overseas architects, to link up stakeholders of various sectors ranging from professionals, scholars, business personnel, to policy makers. We also aim to facilitate

sharing of experiences in implementing BRI projects, reviewing the challenges encountered, and exchanging insights for the way forward for future collaboration in BRI endeavours in the post pandemic era.

Throughout these two days, we have invited renowned speakers for the 5 keynote sessions, and over 30 distinguished panelists for 4 panel discussions from 10 countries/regions to share their wisdoms and experiences. We have confidence that the sharing via onsite and online would help further realise the BRI principles of “consultation and cooperation for shared benefits” (共商、共建、共享) in the Belt and Road region, especially in the development of infrastructure.

In concluding, I have to thank the 26 supporting organisations for their staunch support. The composition of our supporters, from government departments, professional institutes, green organisations, to business sector, is already a sound testimony to the collaborative spirit of Hong Kong in BRI and beyond.

Last but not the least, our heartfelt gratitude for the funding provided by the Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme (PASS), which helps make this meaningful event possible, especially amidst the pandemic challenge. We hope that the HKSAR Government would continue its support, in both funding and promotional efforts, for the professional sector especially for smaller scale architectural practices. Among others, HKIA has proposed to the Government for funding a permanent exhibition centre to showcase Hong Kong architecture and design excellence. Experiences over past decades indicate that pro-active exhibitions, and participation in prominent international architectural exhibitions and conferences are effective means for promoting Hong Kong architects, exporting our professional services, and extending the market.

Lastly, I hope you all — no matter joining onsite or virtual — enjoy the fruitful sharing and insightful discussion in these two days. Wish you all health, prosperity and best of business. Thank you.