

**Speech by the Honourable Donald Tsang
Chief Executive of the HKSAR
For Italy National Day
On June 2, 2011**

Consul General (Ms Alessandra Schiavo), Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Buona Sera. (Good evening in Italian. Pronounced: Boo-on-na Se-ra)

2. I am delighted to join you all in celebrating Italy's National Day.

3. As Italy's 150th Anniversary of unification, this is a particularly special occasion, as the Consul General has so eloquently and passionately highlighted.

4. Over the past century and a half, Italy has shown the rest of the world how to preserve and respect its heritage while, at the same time, forging ahead as a modern, innovative and unified nation.

5. Indeed, there are parallels between the evolution of our two nations, Italy and China. Among other things, both countries have a proud history and a bright future.

6. Both nations are also embracing the opportunities arising from globalisation. The ongoing Chinese Cultural Year in Italy (**NOTE: October 2010 to October 2011**) is a timely reminder of the growing mutual respect and understanding between our communities and friendship between our people.

7. June could also be regarded as the “Italian Cultural Month in Hong Kong”. Thanks to the work of the Consulate General, the Italian Chamber of Commerce and other friends of Italy a feast of activities is taking place.

8. As well as this National Day Reception, there are events across the city featuring Italian music, film, sculpture, theatre and – yes, of course, fast cars.

9. Also, last week, no less than five Italian galleries featured in the Hong Kong International Art Fair known as Art HK. And let’s not forget the delicious Italian food and wine that we enjoy all year round.

10. With all this interest in Italian culture, I am sure that the Consul General’s dream of a “Casa Italia” – a home for Italian art, fashion and culture in Hong Kong – will become a reality before long.

11. Italy already has a permanent and special place in the hearts and minds of people here in Hong Kong.

12. We look forward to Italy being the partner country for the Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Fair in November. There were no less than 116 Italian booths at the Fair last year.

13. Not only is Italy the world's largest wine producer, it is also our 6th largest source of wine imports. Our wine imports from Italy have increased by 135 per cent since we exempted duties on wine in February 2008.

14. I am also pleased that some of Italy's most recognisable companies are preparing to list on the Hong Kong stock market. This is a great way for Italian firms to raise capital and promote their brands here in Hong Kong as well as in the Mainland and throughout Asia.

15. Our Italian business community is well established in Hong Kong. I am delighted to see so many of you here this evening. Your presence is a sure sign that we must be doing something right!

16. We were also privileged to welcome President Napolitano [Napolitano] to Hong Kong last year. His visit to Hong Kong and the

Mainland highlighted Italy's commitment to strengthening our bilateral ties.

17. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a celebration of the strong relations between Hong Kong and Italy and the friendship between our peoples. At the same time, we celebrate Italy's contribution to La Dolce Vita 【La DOL-chay Vee Tah】 (means "the sweet life").

18. Most of all, we are here to celebrate the spirit, courage and hope of all those who strived for a unified Italy and achieved that dream in 1861.

19. I wish you all a very enjoyable and happy 150th National Day reception.

20. Please join me in a toast: To the People of the Italian Republic.

(600 words, approx 5.5 mins, nw, May 26)