

# BHKS

## Belgium Hong Kong Society

SPRING 2020 #12

# HONG KONG



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## Chairman's Message



Piet Steel,  
*Chairman, Belgium Hong Kong Society*

My best wishes for a more peaceful 2020 and an auspicious Year of the Rat.

2019 was a sad year for Hong Kong. I felt very sad myself because Hong Kong means a lot to me and my family. But the first indications for 2020 are not promising. There will be no quick improvement of the situation. The basic social, political and economic challenges facing the Territory will not easily be resolved. It is unlikely that a new consensus between the Government and the protesters will arise soon. Still, the expectations for Hong Kong in 2020 are high but not impossible to achieve if only the violence and vandalism could end and a way forward through dialogue can be found.

My long experience of Hong Kong tells me that the great majority of Hong Kong people are peace-loving, cooperative and always in search of pragmatic solutions. Therefore, I remain optimistic about the future of Hong Kong. I will never forget what a Hong Kong friend of mine told me once: if you bet against Hong Kong, you tend to lose. I hope this will remain true in 2020.

Independently of the current situation in Hong Kong, I have decided to step down as Chairman of the Belgium Hong Kong Society.

Having served as Chairman for almost 20 years, the time has come to pass the gavel to the younger generation. The election of Alexander

De Beir as new Chairman opens up new opportunities to reinvigorate BHKS, to morph into a more dynamic and younger organisation in tune with the new challenges of a changing world. Having studied and worked in Hong Kong, Alexander is the right man, in the right place, at the right time. He is a true friend of Hong Kong, a successful businessman in Belgium, an inveterate networker who, in close co-operation with the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Brussels, will tirelessly continue the good work of the BHKS and lead it to new heights. I wish Alexander every success as Chairman. He will be a great Chairman. He deserves my and your support.

Personally, it has been great honour and pleasure to have been Chairman of the BHKS. This function was a logical step in my personal relationship with Hong Kong, which began in 1993 as Consul General of Belgium. I was a privileged observer of the transition of Hong Kong from a British Territory in the Far East to a City, which rightly proclaimed itself as Asia's World City. After 1997, despite early setbacks of the "SARS" and the financial crises, Hong Kong further developed into an amazingly vibrant and very prosperous City, economically and financially, thriving on its open, non-corrupt society, the rule of law, freedom, and – not to forget – on the fruits of a hard-working population.

In whatever capacity, I am proud to continue to serve, to support and to promote Hong Kong as a loyal friend and advisor. And I say this again, do not bet on the demise of Hong Kong, because the odds are that you might lose...

# Best wishes to all members of the “Belgium Hong Kong Society”



Mr Peter Robberecht  
*Consul General of Belgium in Hong Kong*

As the new Consul General of Belgium in Hong Kong, it is my pleasure to wish all the members of the Belgium Hong Kong Society a happy 2020. I believe the dynamism of the Society, under the leadership of Chairman Piet Steel, is an important asset in our bilateral relationship and I hope it will continue to thrive in the coming year.

Belgium and Hong Kong are close partners and, despite the obvious cultural differences, actually share many similarities. We are both very open economies, with our faces turned towards the wider world. We are both important gateways, to Europe and Mainland China respectively. And we are both free societies, governed by the rule of law.

The numbers back this up: based on EUR 3 billion of annual trade, Belgium is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner of Hong Kong in the European Union (EU). With over 1 500 compatriots who call Hong Kong home, we have our second biggest community in Asia here. And around 100 Belgian companies have a permanent presence in Hong Kong, contributing to the success of this vibrant and international trading hub.

Naturally, we are not blind to the challenges that Hong Kong is currently facing. The Hong Kong model seems to be under threat. As a loyal EU member state, Belgium has joined the European plea for de-escalation, restraint and dialogue, while condemning the violence that we have sadly witnessed in the streets of Hong Kong in the past few months.

We do so because Belgium and the EU continue to believe in the uniqueness of the Hong Kong model, based on the rule of law and acting as a bridge between East and West - in the framework of “one country, two systems”. These are not empty words: the visit of federal Minister Philippe De Backer in November 2019 and recent trade missions of the Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) and the Wallonia Export-Investment Agency (AWEX) are testimony to our constructive and lasting engagement in Hong Kong.

So we all hope that Hong Kong will return to calm and stability soon, in the interest of the people of Hong Kong and in the interest of the many Belgians who have invested in a bright future for this beautiful and unique city.

*A happy new year!*



# BHKS Activities 2019

Over the past year, the BHKS has kept up its momentum in strengthening the bilateral ties between Belgium and Hong Kong through organising, co-organising and supporting a wide range of activities. Among the year's highlights were the "End of Summer Business Seminar" in Brussels, the "Legends of Lion Dance" exhibition in Antwerp, the Hong Kong Night at the Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival (BIFFF) and as ever, the annual Chinese New Year Reception in Brussels. We would like to take the opportunity to thank all our members who participated in these events and for their unfailing support.

## The BHKS Annual Dinner

*January 21, 2019*

The BHKS Annual Dinner took place on 21 January 2019 at the Tangla Hotel Brussels, gathering BHKS members and friends for a highly enjoyable evening.

## The "Legends of Lion Dance" Exhibition

*18 January – 10 February 2019*



To celebrate the Chinese New Year, a special and colourful exhibition was held at the Permeke Bibliotheek, in Antwerp: the "Legends of Lion Dance" exhibition.

The exhibition was its third edition which was held from 18 January till 10 February 2019. Chairman of the BHKS, *Mr Piet Steel*, together with two Aldermen of the City of Antwerp and an official

from the HKETO, Brussels, officiated at the opening reception on 18 January 2019. All BHKS Members were also invited to the opening.

12 unique lionheads made and embroidered in Hong Kong were displayed at the exhibition. Visitors could also learn how lion heads are made, the traditions of Chinese New Year and their importance in Hong Kong culture.

# Chinese New Year Reception

February 19, 2019

The annual Chinese New Year Reception, co-organised by the BHKS and the HKETO, Brussels, with the support of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, took place at the Tangla Hotel Brussels on 19 February 2019. Around 350 VIPs, including the guest of honour, European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, Mr Miguel Arias Cañete, attended the event. All BHKS Members received an invitation to this annual and always most enjoyable occasion.

The Chairman of the BHKS, *Mr Piet Steel*, officiated at the reception, followed by vibrant performance of the Cy Leo Electronic Trio and a lion dance show.



Adding the cash sponsorship received, a total of EUR 3,570 was successfully raised for the BHKS Education Fund during the lucky draw at the Reception. We would like to take the opportunity to thank all our generous sponsors!



## Hong Kong Night at BIFFF

April 17, 2019



The 37<sup>th</sup> Brussels International Fantasy, Fantastic, Thriller and Science Fiction Film Festival (BIFFF) took place at the Palace of Fine Arts in Brussels, Belgium, on 9 – 21 April 2019.

BHKHS Members were invited to the Hong Kong night at BOZAR organised during the BIFFF on 17 April 2019. Members enjoyed the cocktail reception followed by the screening of a Hong Kong movie “Bodies at Rest”.

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## Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival in Antwerp

September 14, 2019



BHKHS supported the staging of the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival in Antwerp organised by the Antwerp-West Rotary Club on 14 September 2019. BHKHS members, their family members and friends were invited to join this traditional



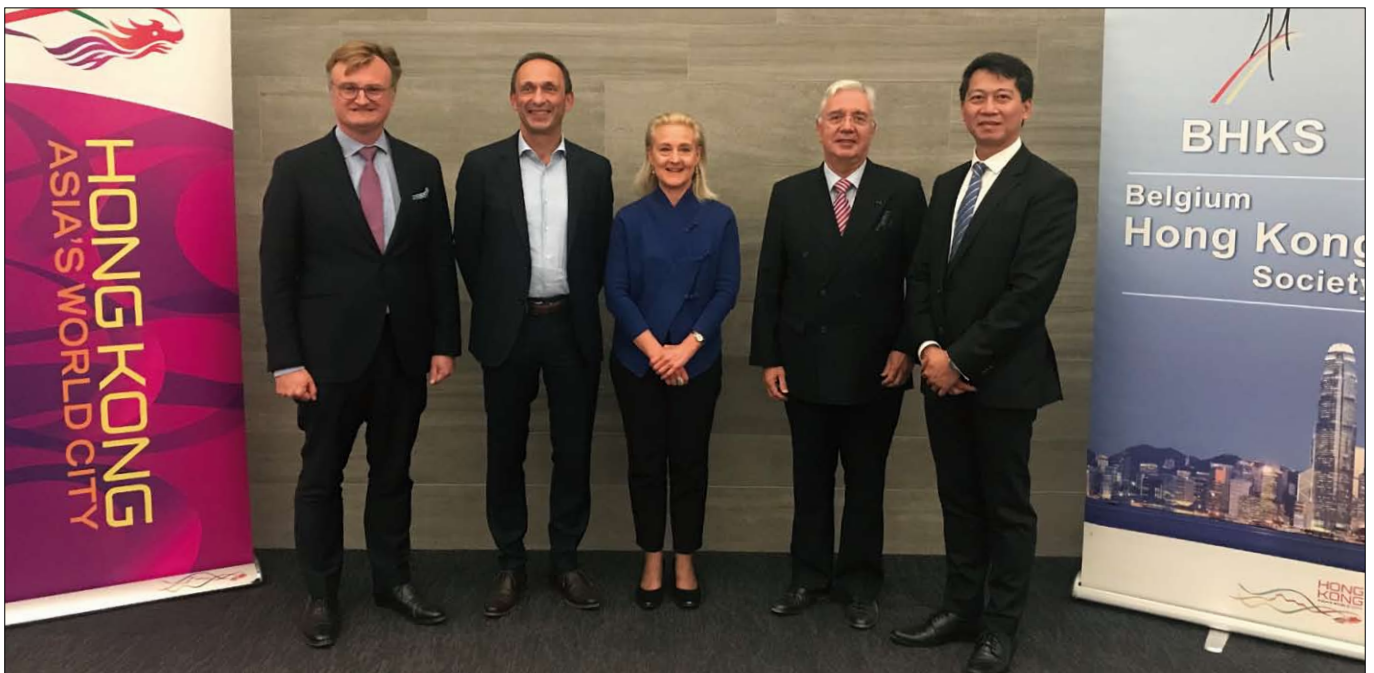
Chinese sport-cum-cultural event. 30 dragon boat teams participated in the festival and around 7 000 visitors attended the event to enjoy the exiting races and colourful activities.

## "End of Summer Business Seminar"

September 17, 2019

The business seminar was held on 17 September 2019 at De Warande, Brussels. Mr Eddie Cheung, Special Representative for Hong Kong Economic and Trade Affairs to the European Union, gave an opening remark to promote Hong Kong as an ideal business destination. The keynote speaker, Mr Ivan Christiaens, General Manager of Keppel Seghers Belgium NV, shared his experience in building an Integrated Waste Management Facility in Hong Kong.

The business seminar received very good feedback from the attendees. A total of around 80 guests joined the event.



# Business Seminar – Hong Kong's first Integrated Waste Management Facility



**Ivan Christiaens**

*General Manager of Keppel Seghers Belgium*

The awarding of a EUR 3 billion contract for Hong Kong's first ever Integrated Waste Management Facility (IWMF) to the Belgian company Keppel Seghers was the subject of the 2019 Business Seminar hosted by BHKS and corporate member ADM Wingfield in September in Brussels. Being built on a reclaimed island off the coast of Shek

Kwu Chau, the ingenuity, complexity and sheer scale of the project was presented in detail by the General Manager of Keppel Seghers Belgium, *Ivan Christiaens*. A fascinating and detailed insight into this contract to design, build and operate Hong Kong's first IWMF for municipal solid waste, members and friends of Hong Kong were taken step by step through the processes that will combine recycling and waste reduction in landfills and production of green electricity.

The implications through facts and figures reflected Hong Kong's clear commitment to the government's waste management strategy and a greener future. Currently, Hong Kong landfills its non-recycled waste. On completion of the project expected in 2024, the total volume of waste treated at the facility will be reduced by more than 90%! Capable of producing some 480 million kilowatt hours of electricity per year, the surplus green energy will be exported into the electricity grid of Hong Kong and power up to 100 000 households, helping to reduce 0.44 million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. A mechanical treatment plant will sort and recycle 200 tonnes per day of glass, plastics and metals,



and will transport the separated materials back to Hong Kong for further processing into other end products. The onsite desalination plant will supply processed water to the plant, with any excess being reused to irrigate the extensive landscaping of the project's Island, as visually aesthetic as it is an educational environment to raise awareness towards a greener Hong Kong – the facility even includes a visitors gallery with daily guided tours for schools and the general public alike.

This IWMF facility contract was awarded in December 2017 after a competitive international tender called by the Environmental Protection Department of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. A 2016 report had shown that while glass and plastic waste disposal had dropped by 10% and 2% respectively, food waste had increased by 5.8% driven by commercial and industrial food waste disposal. And while "special waste" being disposed of at landfills had decreased markedly by 24.1% compared to 2015, Hong Kong pledged to move away from landfill and build a waste energy facility on specially-reclaimed land.

Through their respective subsidiaries, Keppel Infrastructure Services and China Harbour Engineering Company won the contract to design, build and operate an IWMF. Keppel were also awarded the Operations and Maintenance contract for 15 years after completion. In their press release on learning of their win, the Chief Executive Officer of Keppel Infrastructure, *Dr ONG Tiong Guan*, was quoted:

"Keppel is honoured to be able to contribute to Hong Kong's sustainable urbanisation through this iconic project. The IWMF project reflects the Hong Kong government's foresight and resolve to effectively and holistically address waste management. We are proud that our waste-to-energy (WTE) technology has been implemented around the world, building on our proven track record as a competitive and reliable waste management solution provider."

Keppel Segher's WTE technology has been implemented in many landmark waste projects around the world, notably in Qatar and in Manchester, UK, whose Energy-from-Waste plant is one of the largest and most efficient in Europe.

# Flanders' Trade Mission to Hong Kong



Ms Katrien Leinders  
*Trade Commissioner for Flanders and  
Brussels to Hong Kong and Macau*

Despite recent events, Hong Kong's strengths and core competencies remain in place under the "one country, two systems" principle. As long as there still is the rule of law, an independent judiciary, a low and simple tax regime, free flow of capital and world class financial markets, Hong Kong is and remains an important economic center and a gateway to the Mainland China and the growing Asia-Pacific region.

In 2018, Flanders accounted for 96.67% in total Belgian annual exports to Hong Kong. Wallonia represented 2.28%, while Brussels took the remaining 1.05% of national exports to Hong Kong. In 2018, exports from Flanders to Hong Kong totaled EUR 2,022.6 million, while total annual imports amounted to EUR 760.6 million. As a result, in its trade in goods with Hong Kong, Flanders was a net exporter, posting a surplus of EUR 1,261.9 million.

Year-to-date trade data, available from January to August 2019, shows that Flanders exported EUR 1,373.0 million worth of goods to Hong Kong, with imports over that same period amounting to EUR 397.7 million. As a result, the provisional trade-in-goods balance between Flanders and Hong Kong recorded a surplus of EUR 975.3 million. The diamond sector (precious stones and metals) remains the most important one for import and export between Flanders and Hong Kong.

There are still opportunities for other sectors than diamond trade in Hong Kong. Although the tourism and retail sectors have been suffering due to recent social events, Hong Kong is still open for business. This has been proven by the biggest Belgian trade mission which recently visited China, including Hong Kong.

Last November, 30 Flemish companies came to Hong Kong for one day to find new distributors/partners and managed to have about 70 business-to-business meetings, arranged by the Flanders Investment & Trade, all over the different islands of Hong Kong a few hours time. About 10 participants already had an agent in place and were here for follow up. A few companies decided to cancel last minute due to the uncertainty, but all those that came were very happy with the contacts so we are looking forward to seeing some results in the next few months.

Finally, the delegation also comprised investment specialists who had meetings with 5 investment funds interested in investing in biotechnology Europe. As Flanders boasts a very mature and innovative biotechnology hub, we trust that results will soon be made as well.

I also believe that there are other sectors where we could further develop our co-operation. Like the FinTech sector for example. This sector is developing fast in Hong Kong and works closely together with the very developed financial centre that is present here. Flemish companies that provide solutions for payments, blockchain, wealthtech, virtual banking and Insurtech could find an interesting environment here to start operating in Asia.

Flanders is very advanced in solutions regarding waste management as well. While one of our Flemish companies will - in co-operation with a Chinese partner - develop the first integrated waste management facility in Hong Kong, I believe that there are even bigger opportunities where our technology can help Hong Kong tackle environmental issues.

In March 2020, Flanders Investment & Trade will organize another trade mission to Hong Kong. This time in co-operation with Unizo to support companies that are starting to explore Asia by introducing them to both Taiwan and Hong Kong.



## In remembrance of our Honorary Chairman Mr Manfred Loeb

The Honorary Chairman of BHKS, Mr Manfred Loeb, passed away on 14 September 2019 at the age of 92. Mr Loeb was a close friend of Hong Kong. He was a loyal

and dedicated to BHKS and made invaluable contributions to enhance the bilateral relations between Hong Kong and Belgium. Mr Loeb will be greatly missed.

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## BHKS Background

Founded in 1986, the objective of the Belgium Hong Kong Society (BHKS) is to promote bilateral economic, social and cultural exchanges between Belgium and Hong Kong through the organisation of a variety of business and cultural activities. BHKS is also a member of the Federation of Hong Kong Business Associations Worldwide.

Our focus is to promote Hong Kong as an economic gateway into the Mainland China, a hub of the modern lifestyle and a model of good governance. We offer unique networking opportunities and first-hand information.

Our Members all share the passion for Hong Kong. As a member, you will be invited to the annual Chinese New Year Reception in Brussels, a highlight of the Brussels' social calendar. We celebrate the Chinese New Year in style with

additional Chinese entertainment and authentic Chinese food, together with many friends of Hong Kong, officials of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Brussels and the EU diplomatic corps. This is just one of our many attractive activities throughout the year.

We are truly grateful to the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Brussels for their continued support in co-organising a variety of Hong Kong events in Belgium.

BHKS belongs to all friends of Hong Kong and your participation is essential in helping us to improve. Please do contact us directly if you have any feedback or comments on the newsletter or on BHKS as a whole.

# The BHKS Education Fund

## *Application for BHKS Education Fund is now opened!*

The BHKS Education Fund was established by the BHKS in 2010 to sponsor exchange activities of young people between Belgium and Hong Kong with a view to promoting stronger and more sustainable ties between the two places. The BHKS Education Fund aims at supporting the following projects:

- a) Familiarization visits/study tours to Hong Kong;
- b) Short-term academic exchange programmes between Belgium and Hong Kong; and
- c) Other projects to enhance cultural exchange between Belgium and Hong Kong.

The proposed projects must be non-profit-making. The Fund is opened for application by universities/tertiary institutions in Belgium, including student organizations/associations formed in these institutions. Applications made by individual students will be considered under exceptional circumstances.

In considering the applications, the BHKS will take into account the following factors:

- a) Effectiveness in fostering closer bilateral academic, social and cultural exchanges between Belgium and Hong Kong;
- b) Innovation of the project e.g. whether the project involves innovative ideas in promoting the ties between the two places; and
- c) Number of individuals to be benefitted from the project.

Application is open throughout the year. Interested applicants can submit the completed application form, together with the supporting documents to the BHKS Secretariat. Application will be vetted by the Board of the BHKS and applicants will be informed of the outcome within three months after the submission of the application. Interested applicants can contact the Secretariat for any enquiries. You might also wish to check out our website at [www.bhks.be](http://www.bhks.be) for more information.

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