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**Mr C Y LEUNG,  
GBM, GBS, JP**

Chief Executive  
Hong Kong  
Special Administrative Region

I congratulate the UGC as it enters the 50th year, a major milestone and cause for celebration. I commend the contributions of past and present Committees to make our institutes of higher education world-class.

This Golden Jubilee is also an occasion to reflect on the many achievements of our universities over the past five decades and the vital role the UGC has played in steering our higher education establishment, which has expanded to eight institutions, a number of which are consistently placed high in international rankings.

Major expansion and enhancement of higher education in the past five decades have contributed in no small measure to Hong Kong's rise as an international city. These institutions have served Hong Kong's economic and social development and, crucially, nurtured the talent our city depends on.

The multinational profile of our university faculty testifies to the appeal of Hong Kong as a place that upholds intellectual freedom, where scholars are free to pursue all forms of research. Free flow of information and our global orientation enhance our strengths. Our universities have made major contributions to many fields, from physics and chemistry to medicine and the humanities. All these have made Hong Kong a desirable and stimulating environment for people to pursue higher education, in turn contributing to the city's rising status as a regional education hub.

During my 12 years as Council Chairman of two UGC-funded institutions, I saw firsthand the continuous improvement in both teaching and research. I fully concur with the old Chinese adage, "Promoting education lays the foundation of nation building; nurturing talents ranks top in policy making" (「敬教勸學，建國之大本；興賢育才，為政之先務」). Education is a key priority for the Hong Kong SAR Government. We back that commitment with investment in education, thus ensuring Hong Kong's continued success as Asia's world city.

With the UGC's continuous role as a vital bridge between the administration and institutions, I am confident that our higher education sector will grow from strength to strength.