Following is the speech delivered by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Carrie Yau, at the opening ceremony of Mediterranean Arts Festival today (October 19):

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be here this evening to officiate at the opening ceremony of the Mediterranean Arts Festival.

Enveloped by Europe, Asia and Africa with more than 20 countries along the coast, the Mediterranean is a vast region of ancient civilisations that has nurtured a rich tapestry of arts and culture. That is why the Leisure and Cultural Services Department has specially chosen the Mediterranean, which embodies the diverse cultural characteristics of the three continents, as the theme of the second World Culture Festival this year.

In this Festival, apart from the various exciting programmes featuring distinguished artists from the Mediterranean region, there will also be school tour performances, workshops, master classes, talks, exhibitions and an outdoor carnival, in a bid to spread the unique and exotic Mediterranean charm to our community.

Opening the Festival tonight is “The Italian Feast” performed by the Balthasar Neumann Choir and Ensemble. This sumptuous performance recreates for us a 17th century Italian carnival, with 28 top-notch singers and musicians performing Baroque music and dance in gorgeous costumes and exquisite masks amidst elaborately designed theatrical and stage effect.

I wish to thank all our friends who have given their fervent support to make our Mediterranean Festival so charming and colourful. Special thanks go to our Consular Corps, our sponsors and supporters in the arts, cultural and media sector. Above all, I thank you for bringing your friends and family here today.

A wide array of spectacular performances have been lined up in this month-long cultural extravaganza for your participation, and I am sure that all of you
will find your favourite programmes.

I wish you a very enjoyable evening.

Thank you!