



ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR VICTOR HENRY MAIR
DOCTOR OF HUMANITIES, *honoris causa*

Chancellor the Honourable Donald Tsang Yam-kuen, Council Chairman Mr Pang Yiu-kai and members of Council, President Anthony Cheung, staff, students, and friends,

It is my great honour and pleasure to be here today to receive the recognition inherent in the honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities from the HKIEd.

I had the good fortune to spend much of this past summer on the beautiful Tai Po campus of the Institute. During June and July, I was a Visiting Professor in the Department of Chinese. I must say that I enjoyed my stay at HKIEd tremendously. First of all, the setting of the Institute is idyllic, which suited my mood perfectly. Next, the hospitality and friendliness shown to me by students, faculty, and staff were warm and genuine. From the library to the canteen, I found the facilities to be superb and the support to be prompt and expert.

In a way, however, my ties to the Institute interestingly go back to about the time it was founded 16 years ago. It was then that I first got to know Professor Zhu Qingzhi, who is now Head of the Department of Chinese. But even before that, ever since I started coming to Hong Kong in the early 1980s on my way to and from China, returning – and sometimes staying for lengthy periods – scores of times, I fell in love with this city. Actually, I first came to Hong Kong back in 1967, when I left Nepal after having served there for two years in the Peace Corps. Those were difficult days for the city, and I remember being told to fill up the bathtub in my hotel room with water because the supply to the city was often cut off for various reasons. The brave and resourceful spirit of the citizens of Hong Kong at that time made a profound impression upon me.

I have always felt that Hong Kong is the financial, intellectual, and cultural hub of Eastern Asia, and, by Eastern Asia, I include both Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia, as well as East Asia. This is a dynamic city that serves as a crossroads for people, goods, and ideas passing through from one part of Asia to another. It is also a bridge to the rest of the world – Australia, New Zealand, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. This position, this role, has not changed one iota since 1997. In fact, the significance of Hong Kong has only intensified, since the progressive influence of this vital city can now more easily be transmitted to the People's Republic of China, of which it has become an integral part.

In my estimation, the HKIEd offers a unique platform for the fundamental and beneficial transformation of society, not just in Hong Kong, but in China and beyond. What could be more important for the prosperity and welfare of our nations than primary, secondary, and higher education? You have here at this unique institution, nestled at the foot of Pat Sin Leng 八仙嶺, the extraordinary opportunity to innovate and develop positive advances in society and in the intellectual and cultural lives of future generations. I am convinced that this will happen, and that HKIEd will play a pivotal role in the process.

I am sure that my fellow honorary doctorate recipients, Dr Ela Ramesh Bhatt, Ms Ann Hui On-wah and Professor Sharon Lynn Kagan, join me in warmly wishing this outstanding Institute a glorious future. We have every expectation that, before long, it will become a University, which it essentially already is in all but name.