



## **Speech of HKU Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui**

Distinguished Colleagues and Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the University of Hong Kong, I welcome you to the 8th Centenary Distinguished Lecture.

As the name indicates, this is the 8<sup>th</sup> of a series of lectures to celebrate the 100 years of history that HKU has to its name.

Today, we have a most distinguished guest speaker, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Daw Suu, thank you very much for your graciousness to take part in today's Dialogue.

I wish to welcome you to the HKU campus, albeit over this video link!

Ladies and gentlemen, to all of you in this Hall, Aung San Suu Kyi needs no introduction and, as a matter of fact, this is true to billions of people around the world.

For her selflessness and determination to fight for her people's rights, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. As she was being held under house arrest at the time, her acceptance speech was read by her son Alexander on her behalf in Oslo.

For decades, Aung San Suu Kyi has been an icon of democracy both at home and around the world.

The fact, that we need to conduct this lecture and dialogue via video link between Burma and Hong Kong today, speaks volumes to the unusual situation surrounding Daw Suu even till now, despite her release from house arrest last November.

As I stand here, I should mention that we have had many great minds and distinguished individuals spoke in this great hall of the University, and that each of them have left a mark in our 100 years of history.

In 1923, the founder of modern China, Dr Sun Yat-sen, spoke here at the invitation of the then President of HKU Students' Union. Dr Sun is regarded as an alumnus of this First and Foremost University of Hong Kong, because he studied at the Hong Kong College of Medicine, which subsequently became part of HKU.

In his speech, Dr Sun said: "*I feel as though I have returned home, because Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong are the birth place of my knowledge.*"

Three years ago, in 2008, the former President of the United States of America, Bill Clinton, delivered a speech in this Hall, after he received an honorary doctoral degree from this University.

He, too, stressed the contemporary relevance of universities to societies across the world.

It is therefore perhaps no co-incidence that our speaker today happens to share the same commitment. Throughout her life, Daw Suu has been a firm believer in the importance of education and the value of universities as spaces for individual and social transformation.

As a university, HKU has the tradition for scholars and students to think critically, independently, and, freely.

The University stands for the right to freedom of expression, collective thinking and peaceful discussion.

It underscores the power of positive and cooperative reinforcement.

These are principles HKU has always stood for and continues to uphold, as rooted in the University's Motto – originally in Chinese – 明德格物 (mingde gewu), to manifest virtue and to investigate things. Both phrases are taken from the Confucian classic 大學 – *The Great Learning*.

These four characters, the University's Motto from the very beginning, were later translated into Latin – *Sapientia et Virtus*– meaning 'Wisdom and Virtue' in English.

In speaking to us today, Daw Suu adds to HKU's long tradition of hosting internationally renowned academics and respected leaders on campus, to share their knowledge and experience with our staff and students, alumni, and, members of the public.

In addition to the University's belief in wisdom and virtue, we are committed to sharing our knowledge and heritage, and, serving society and humankind, so that we can make a difference to the world.

Once again – thank you, Daw Suu – for joining us at HKU today. We look forward to hearing your words of wisdom.