

Honorary Doctor of Business Administration

Dr Peter WOO Kwong-ching

Citation written and delivered by Professor LEUNG Kwok

Chairman:

In spite of the extraordinary range of vital decisions Dr Peter Woo Kwong-ching faces on an everyday basis, he handles them with grace — a remarkable feat indeed when one considers the range of businesses under his stewardship as Chairman of Wheelock and Company Limited and Wharf (Holdings) Limited. Dr Woo's activities span television, communications, retail and hotel operations, public transport, real estate and logistics. In addition to overseeing the expansion of his companies' businesses, Dr Woo has served the Hong Kong public untiringly in areas including education, medical health, environmental protection, and trade and economics. His wide-ranging contributions in these areas have brought great benefits to the citizens of Hong Kong.

One has only to look at Dr Woo's personal history to understand how he has come to be such a talented leader. Born in Shanghai, he came to Hong Kong when he was four years old. Under the guidance of his father — who holds a doctoral degree in architecture from Germany — Dr Woo realized at an early age that it is important to be independent, learned, and global in his vision. When Dr Woo was twelve years old, his parents arranged a two-month solo tour of Europe, which introduced him to the enormous breadth and diversity of the world. Dr Woo was a boarding student at St. Stephen's College on Hong Kong island during the 1950s and 1960s when Hong Kong's economy started to take off and the society changed dramatically. He not only enjoyed studying in the serene environment of the school, but also actively participated in a variety of extra curricular activities. He distinguished himself in secondary school as captain of the swimming team and he served as a school prefect. After secondary school, he went to the U.S. to study at the University of Cincinnati, where he majored in physics and mathematics and graduated as the elected senior class president. He then enrolled in the Master of Business Administration programme at Columbia University, completing the two-year programme within a year. Upon graduation, he joined the Chase Manhattan Bank, where he again proved himself a fast learner by completing the

one-year training programme in five months. This launched his challenging career in banking, which demanded vigilance, meticulousness, and diligence.

The careful nurturing by his parents and the broad education Dr Woo received in secondary school helped to mould him as an independent and well-rounded person. Science education in university strengthened his logical thinking, and his training at Columbia Business School further developed his analytical skills and foresight. His career in banking refined these abilities and brought them to fruition. Knowing the exposure and education Dr Woo received in his youth, his extraordinary achievements today should surprise no one.

In 1975, Dr Woo accepted Sir Yue Kong Pao's invitation to join the World-Wide Shipping Group. He was instrumental in the Group's acquisition of the Wharf Company from the Jardine Group in the 1980s. A series of initiatives followed to expand into new areas of business. In the 1990s, Dr Woo saw the promise of television and communications as high growth industries of the next century and took the plunge into cable TV, broadband communications and telephone industries. Today, his business group is one of the biggest and most successful enterprises in Hong Kong.

As a student, Dr Woo placed equal emphasis on studies and extra curricular activities. Today, he takes a similar approach towards managing his companies and serving the public. Dr Woo has held a wide variety of important public offices. He served as Chairman of the Council of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University from 1993 to 1997. During this period, Dr Woo worked with the university's senior management to launch fundamental reforms that enhanced the efficiency and professionalism of governance of the university. Professor Poon Chung-kwong, President of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, describes Dr Woo as an outstanding leader with an inspiring vision, expeditious in analyzing problems and resolute in taking necessary actions. The measures taken by Dr Woo and the university's senior management have been vital in helping the university cope with today's severe cuts in the education budget.

Dr Woo has served the Hospital Authority and its predecessor, the Provisional Hospital Authority, since 1988, and he was the Chairman of the Hospital Authority from 1995 to 2000. Throughout his service, Dr Woo has played an important role in steering the reform of the public hospital system away from the long established administrative-led tradition and toward policies and management processes that focus on frontline health care services and the provision of high

quality health care services to the public. Dr E K Yeoh, former Chief Executive of the Hospital Authority who worked closely with Dr Woo, has paid tribute to the critical role Dr Woo played in the transformation of the public hospital system. The “Inverted Management Pyramid” approach, designed and advocated by Dr Woo, has helped management to focus on their primary role and responsibility in providing support to frontline units of health care professionals. According to Dr Yeoh, Dr Woo was outstanding as Chairman of the Hospital Authority. He provided strong leadership and insightful governance coupled with an unflinching sense of public duty, accessibility, generosity and charisma.

Since 2000, Dr Woo has served as Chairman of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council. Once again, he led the Council’s management through major reforms to improve accountability and transparency. These reforms have helped the Council to be responsive to the needs of enterprises of all sizes and effective in providing them with high value-added services. The ex-CEO of the Trade Development Council, Dr Michael Cho-cheung Sze said, in recollecting his days working with Dr Woo: “He was extremely far-sighted and would rigorously analyze problems that came up before him. He was very creative and insightful, yet he would readily listen to other people’s opinions. It is rare to find someone like Dr Woo, who is so committed and contributes so much to public service.”

Dr Woo actively contributes to public service not only with his time and efforts, but also with significant donations. He generously donated HK\$120 million to the Prince of Wales Hospital to build the Sir Yue Kong Pao Centre for Cancer and the Lady Pao Children’s Cancer Centre. He also gave the Hong Kong Polytechnic University HK\$30 million for its future development. In recognition of Dr Woo’s generosity, the university named its library after his father-in-law, Sir Yue Kong Pao. Since the 1990s, Dr Woo has played an active role in environmental protection. In collaboration with the government, he donated HK\$50 million to set up the Hong Kong Environment and Conservation Fund Committee and has served as its Chairman.

Dr Woo’s accomplishments have been recognized with a variety of honors. He was appointed Justice of the Peace by the Hong Kong Government in 1993 and selected Leader of the Year by the *Hongkong Standard* in 1995. In 1998, the Government of the Hong Kong SAR awarded him the Gold Bauhinia Star medal. He has received honorary doctoral degrees from universities in Hong Kong, the United States and Australia. Dr Woo is not only an outstanding business leader,

but also a pioneer in public service reforms and a compassionate philanthropist. To pay tribute to his exceptional achievements and contributions, it is my pleasure to present Dr Peter Woo Kwong-ching to you, Mr Chairman, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Business Administration, *honoris causa*.