

Chief Executive expresses regret at resignation of two non-permanent judges of Court of Final Appeal

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, today (June 7) expressed regret at the resignation of Lord Sumption and Lord Collins of Mapesbury as non-permanent judges of the Court of Final Appeal of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). Mr Lee noted that Lord Collins of Mapesbury had stated that he continued to "have the fullest confidence in the Court and the total independence of its members".

On the statement by Lord Collins of Mapesbury that he had resigned from the Court because of the political situation in Hong Kong, Mr Lee said, "I must stress that the large-scale riots and Hong Kong version of 'colour revolution' in 2019 seriously threatened national security and the safety of the HKSAR. To plug the loophole of Hong Kong's near-vacuum of national security laws at the time, the Central Government promulgated and implemented the Hong Kong National Security Law, and the HKSAR also completed the legislation on Article 23 of the Basic Law, enacting the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance. Meanwhile, the human rights and freedoms that Hong Kong residents enjoy are protected in accordance with the law. The provisions of the Basic Law, the Hong Kong National Security Law and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance all explicitly stipulate that the rights and freedoms under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) as applied to Hong Kong, including the freedoms of speech, of the press, of publication, of association, of assembly, of procession and of demonstration, are to be protected in accordance with the law."

"Since Hong Kong's return to the motherland, the political system of Hong Kong has been under a comprehensive institutional arrangement under the Basic Law. Hong Kong is a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China, and the systems and powers of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches are clearly stated in the Basic Law. The rights and freedoms of Hong Kong people, including those stipulated in the ICCPR, the ICESCR and international labour conventions, are also clearly stated in the Basic Law. These systems have remained unchanged since the promulgation and implementation of the Basic Law, and will not change in the future. As reiterated by President Xi Jinping in his important speeches, 'there is no reason for us to change such a good policy, and we must adhere to it in the long run'."

"Hong Kong has transitioned from chaos to order. That did not change the human rights and freedoms enjoyed by citizens in accordance with the law. Nor did it change the courts' exercise of independent judicial power, free from any interference. The only difference is that national security is now better

safeguarded, the safety and stability of Hong Kong is now better upheld, and citizens' good living and working environment is now better ensured."