

First International Ombudsman Summit 2024 in Hong Kong celebrates 35th anniversary of Ombudsman Office (with photo)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Office of The Ombudsman of Hong Kong will host the inaugural International Ombudsman Summit 2024 on December 3, 2024 (Tuesday) at the Hong Kong Palace Museum, West Kowloon Cultural District. This significant event also marks the 35th anniversary of the establishment of the Office, with an Anniversary Reception planned for the evening to celebrate this important milestone.

The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Mr John Lee, will officiate at the Closing Ceremony of the Summit and the 35th Anniversary Reception Ceremony, while the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, will officiate at the Summit Opening in the morning. The Director-General of International Cooperation Department, National Commission of Supervision, Mr Cai Wei, and Deputy Commissioner, National Public Complaints and Proposals Administration Mr Li Zijun will also attend and give keynote speeches at the Summit.

The Summit, with the theme "Ombudsman in a Changing World: Learning from the Past; Preparing for the Future", will provide a platform for ombudsmen of different jurisdictions and systems, dispute resolution organisations, professionals and academics from all around the globe to exchange insights and share experiences and best practices. It also enables meaningful discussions about the evolving challenges faced by Ombudsman systems and institutions as well as in-depth deliberations on future developments in the field. The Summit will feature three panel sessions, namely "Learning from the Past", "Preparing for the Future" and "Promoting Mediation and Multi-agencies Collaboration in Handling Public Complaints".

The Summit has received an overwhelming response from ombudsmen and institutions worldwide. So far, over 140 overseas and Mainland participants from about 40 countries and regions across six continents, including the First Vice-President of the International Ombudsman Institute, the President of the Asian Ombudsman Association, a multitude of ombudsmen, over 30 consuls, and senior personnel from more than 20 international bodies and local organisations, have enrolled to join the Summit. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, European Union Office to Hong Kong and Macao, the Badan Arbitrase Nasional Indonesia Arbitration Centre and the Institution of the Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco are among those international bodies. The Office will also arrange live streaming to facilitate global counterparts' participation in the Summit.

The Ombudsman, Mr Jack Chan, said, "The Summit offers the best occasion for ombudsmen and senior members of institutions from around the world, local, the Mainland and international professionals and academia to share their insights, experiences and best practices. It also provides the best opportunity for Hong Kong to demonstrate our distinctive advantage of having strong support from the motherland and close connection with the world under 'one country, two systems'".

Mr Jack Chan said that the response to the 35th Anniversary Reception has been positive. So far, about 230 guests, including Members of the Executive Council and the Legislative Council, senior government officials, chairpersons of chambers of commerce, and local professionals and academics, have registered to join the event.

With the belief to further enhance quality public administration, the Office is going to sign and exchange a Memorandum of Understanding with representatives from eight countries and regions across five continents. These include Ontario, Canada and Hawaii in North America; Curaçao in South America; Slovakia in Europe; Indonesia, Korea and Macao in Asia; and Zambia in Africa. The aim is to foster professional knowledge and information exchange, build long-term partnerships, and demonstrate Hong Kong's important role as a "super connector" and "super value-adder".

On the day following the Summit, December 4 (Wednesday), overseas guests will join an array of social and cultural programmes arranged by the Office to experience the exceptional charisma of Hong Kong, as well as its vitality and vibrancy as a dynamic city. One of the key programmes is to visit the Legislative Council (LegCo) and the City Gallery. By touring the conference and educational facilities at the LegCo Complex and meeting and sharing with the LegCo President, various panel chairpersons and LegCo Members, overseas guests can understand better the enhanced political system and legislative procedures of the HKSAR. More than 80 international ombudsmen and senior representatives have enrolled to join this visit.

Other social and cultural programmes include Hong Kong Geopark Tour, City Walk in Central and Mid-Levels, Wing Chun Wellness Workshop, Hong Kong Tram Ride and Night Horse Racing Entertainment. These social and cultural activities can showcase Hong Kong's cultural diversity and its historical heritage as the place where East meets West. They will also provide excellent opportunities for overseas guests to explore Hong Kong's characteristics, appreciate its natural beauty and picturesque sceneries, understand its culture and history, as well as experience her prosperity and resplendence.

Mr Jack Chan said, "These activities can demonstrate the global position of the HKSAR as a cosmopolitan city as well as an international hub of financial, trade, professional services and tourism, and bolster its international image as a diverse and inclusive city that brings the East and West together. The programmes also offer us the chance to tell good stories of our country and Hong Kong to impress the world with our achievements in advancing from governance to prosperity under the 'patriots administering Hong Kong' principle."

Mr Jack Chan emphasised the significance of this event, "Thirty-five years ago, the Office of The Ombudsman embarked on a vital mission to promote administrative fairness, accountability, and transparency. Today, we stay committed to our calling and hold steadfast to the core values that have been guiding us to go from strength to strength; we are resolute in providing better and more fit-for-purpose public services and bring about a stronger sense of happiness and fulfilment among members of the public."

For more information on the Summit and the programmes, please visit the Summit website: www.ios2024.ombudsman.hk and refer to the annex.

