

HKSAR Government strongly condemns and opposes deliberate smearing and irresponsible statement by “Hong Kong Watch” and other organisations on Basic Law Article 23 legislation

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (February 20) firmly opposed and strongly condemned a joint statement made by "Hong Kong Watch" and other organisations on the Basic Law Article 23 legislation.

A spokesman for the HKSAR Government said, "The joint statement smacks of deliberate smears and is no further from the truth. The HKSAR Government must refute and set the record straight."

"Regarding the measures concerning enforcement powers, procedural matters and arrangements on the serving of sentences of convicted persons as mentioned in the consultation document on the Basic Law Article 23 legislation, similar provisions are also present in legislation such as the National Security Act 2023 and the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Act 2020 of the United Kingdom. It is fully justified for the HKSAR to put forward measures that could be considered, having regard to the relevant laws of foreign countries, as well as the shortcomings as revealed from experiences gained from handling cases concerning offence endangering national security. Those organisations completely disregarded relevant laws of the countries in which they are situated and made skewed remarks that the HKSAR Government's legislative proposals on the Basic Law Article 23 undermined human rights, exposing their sheer hypocrisy and double standards," the spokesman pointed out.

"Remarks on the offences relating to 'seditious intention' in the joint statement, which alleged that offences relating to 'seditious intention' would criminalise peaceful criticisms against the government, are clearly wrong and amounted to scaremongering. It intentionally ignored paragraph 4.8 of the consultation document, which proposed circumstances that do not constitute 'seditious intention'. Making reasonable and genuine criticisms of government policies based on objective facts, pointing out issues or offering views for improvement will not violate offences relating to sedition intention."

The joint statement also appeals to foreign chambers of commerce and international companies based in Hong Kong to re-evaluate risks, and even requests them to impose so-called "sanctions" on officials handling the Basic Law Article 23 legislation. It totally disrespects the constitutional duty of the HKSAR and blatantly tramples on the legislative process of the HKSAR. Such practice interferes through intimidation in the affairs of Hong Kong

that are purely China's internal affairs. It not only violates the international law and basic norms that govern international relations, but also allegedly constitutes the offence of "collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security" under Article 29 of the National Security Law.

"What the joint statement advocates squarely reflects the ongoing national security threats which anti-China and destabilising forces pose. The HKSAR Government will complete the legislative exercise as early as possible to plug the relevant national security loopholes, and in the process, it will listen to the constructive suggestions from various sectors and give full and prudent consideration to the Basic Law, and the relevant provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as applied to Hong Kong," the spokesman stressed.