

HKSAR Government strongly condemns slanders, smears and divisive act by anti-China organisation "Hong Kong Watch" regarding Basic Law Article 23 legislation

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government on May 20 strongly condemned the "briefing" published by anti-China organisation "Hong Kong Watch", which made untruthful, slandering and smearing remarks against the legislation of Article 23 of the Basic Law and requested the Government of the United Kingdom (UK) to impose so-called "sanctions" on HKSAR Government officials, deliberately misleading the public and smearing the Hong Kong National Security Law (NSL) and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (the Ordinance).

A spokesman for the HKSAR Government said, "The so-called 'sanctions' mentioned in the 'briefing' smack of despicable political manipulation to intimidate the HKSAR officials safeguarding national security. These grossly interfere in China's internal affairs and Hong Kong affairs, and violate the international law and the basic norms governing international relations. The HKSAR despises such so-called 'sanctions' and is not intimidated by such a despicable behaviour. The HKSAR will resolutely continue to discharge the duty of safeguarding national security."

The HKSAR Government spokesman said, "The HKSAR is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China, and as a local administrative region that enjoys a high degree of autonomy under the principle of 'one country, two systems', comes directly under the jurisdiction of the Central People's Government. The core essence of the Sino-British Joint Declaration is about China's resumption of the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong. It did not authorise the UK to interfere in Hong Kong's affairs after its return to the motherland. The UK has no sovereignty, jurisdiction or right of supervision over Hong Kong after its return to the motherland."

The spokesman also said, "The HKSAR Government steadfastly safeguards the rights and freedoms enjoyed by Hong Kong people as protected under the law. Since Hong Kong's return to the motherland, human rights in the city have always been robustly guaranteed constitutionally by both the Constitution and the Basic Law. The NSL and the Ordinance also clearly stipulate that human rights shall be respected and protected in safeguarding national security in the HKSAR, and that the rights and freedoms, including the freedoms of speech, of the press, of publication, of association, of assembly, of procession and of demonstration, that Hong Kong residents enjoy under the Basic Law and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as applied to Hong Kong, shall be protected in

accordance with the law. Nonetheless, just as the case with other places in the world, such rights and freedoms are not absolute. The ICCPR also expressly states that some of them may be subject to restrictions as prescribed by law that are necessary for protection of national security, public safety, public order or the rights and freedoms of others, etc.

"Following the successful enactment of the Ordinance, the shortcomings in the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for the HKSAR to safeguard national security are addressed. We must once again emphasise that the Ordinance is a piece of legislation to defend against external forces that endanger our national security, acting like a sturdier door and a more effective door lock to defend our home. The HKSAR Government strongly urges these organisations with ulterior motives to stop smearing and interfering in Hong Kong affairs which are internal affairs of China. It is incumbent upon these organisations to ensure that their remarks concerning the NSL and the Ordinance are fair and just, and stop making scaremongering remarks.

"We must also point out that the HKSAR law enforcement agencies have been taking law enforcement actions based on evidence and strictly in accordance with the law in respect of the acts of the persons or entities concerned, paying no regard to their political stance, background or occupation.

"Not only is 'Hong Kong Watch' an anti-China organisation, many of its members are also anti-China and destabilising forces in the front line, who have called for so-called 'sanctions' by foreign countries against officials of the Central People's Government and the HKSAR Government repeatedly. Members of the public in Hong Kong and the international community should see the organisation in its true colours and not to be misled by its skewed remarks with ulterior motives. The HKSAR Government will continue to safeguard national security fearlessly, so that the HKSAR can focus its efforts on developing the economy, improving people's livelihood and maintaining the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong."