

HKSAR Government strongly condemns US Congress for interfering in Hong Kong matters

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (November 30) strongly condemned the United States (US) House Foreign Affairs Committee for passing the so-called Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Certification Act, its complete disregard of the status of the HKSAR under "one country, two systems", its malicious slander against the just and legitimate objective of the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law (NSL) and the fact that human rights and the rule of law are properly protected in accordance with the law by the HKSAR Government, and its gross interference in the affairs of Hong Kong. That Act is factually wrong. It aims to achieve political objectives by smearing and attacking the work of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) in the US on promoting mutually beneficial economic and trade relations and cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and the US, and by misleadingly luring the removal of the privileges, exemptions and immunities enjoyed by and even the closure of the ETOs. The HKSAR Government strongly condemned such attempts to damage the trade relations owing to individual political interests, and sternly urged the US not to violate again the basic norms governing international relations and to stop political smears and attacks on the HKSAR and interfering in Hong Kong matters.

The HKSAR Government has been establishing and maintaining economic and trade relations with places around the world in accordance with the "one country, two systems" principle and has, pursuant to Article 156 of the Basic Law and legislation of the host countries, set up 14 overseas ETOs as the official representatives of the HKSAR, including the three ETOs established in the US.

In their respective jurisdictions, the ETOs in Washington DC, New York and San Francisco maintain close liaison with interlocutors in government, business, think tanks and various sectors to enrich ties between Hong Kong and the US in different areas such as trade, investment, arts and culture. The smooth operation of the three ETOs in the US contributes to strengthening co-operation between Hong Kong and the US in different areas, and is mutually beneficial to both places.

In fact, the US enjoys significant economic benefit in Hong Kong. The US enjoyed a trade surplus of US\$284.9 billion with Hong Kong in the past 10 years, the largest among its global trading partners, and more than 1 200 US companies have set up businesses in Hong Kong. If the US insists on undermining the mutually beneficial relations between Hong Kong and the US through the so-called Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Certification Act, it will ultimately harm the interests of the US and its companies.

The three ETOs of the HKSAR in the US will continue to promote Hong Kong's unique advantages, tell the good stories of Hong Kong and, where necessary, refute erroneous reports and clarify misconceptions without fear or favour, so as to foster economic and trade relations and co-operation on different fronts between Hong Kong and the US on a mutually beneficial basis.

The HKSAR is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China. The enactment of the NSL aims to, among others, improve the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for safeguarding national security of the HKSAR, as well as maintain prosperity and stability of the HKSAR. The HKSAR Government will continue to resolutely, fully and faithfully implement the NSL to prevent, suppress and punish in accordance with the law acts and activities that endanger national security.

The HKSAR Government firmly safeguards the rights and freedoms of Hong Kong residents protected by law. Since Hong Kong's return to the motherland, human rights of Hong Kong residents have been firmly protected by the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law. Hong Kong residents enjoy the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Basic Law, the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and other relevant laws. The NSL clearly stipulates that human rights shall be respected and protected in safeguarding national security in the HKSAR, and that the rights and freedoms, which Hong Kong residents enjoy under the Basic Law and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as applied to Hong Kong, including freedom of speech, press, publication, association, and assembly, shall be protected in accordance with the law.

The legal system in the HKSAR is robust and transparent. The Basic Law guarantees that the common law system continues to be practised in Hong Kong, the independence of the Judiciary, and that the exercise of judicial power shall be free from interference. In addition, the power of final adjudication is vested in the HKSAR Court of Final Appeal (CFA). Eminent jurists from other common law jurisdictions (from the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada) are appointed as overseas non-permanent judges of the CFA. This helps maintain a high degree of confidence in the legal system of the HKSAR, and allows Hong Kong to maintain strong links with other common law jurisdictions.