

HKSAR Government strongly condemns US Congress for slandering laws on safeguarding national security in Hong Kong and smearing Hong Kong human rights situation

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (September 11) strongly condemned the United States (US) House of Representatives for making use of the so-called Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Certification Act to slander laws on safeguarding national security in Hong Kong and smear the human rights situation in Hong Kong. The US House of Representatives' fact-twisting attack on Hong Kong is politically driven, violates international law and the basic norms governing international relations, and grossly interferes in the affairs of Hong Kong. The HKSAR refutes this action resolutely and condemns it strongly.

The so-called Act is a self-deception of double standards. Despite the US having the most stringent national security legislation, the Act maliciously slanders against the just and legitimate objective of the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law (NSL) and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO), disregards the constitutional obligation and inherent rights of the HKSAR to safeguard national security, smears the fact that human rights and the rule of law are properly protected in accordance with the law by the HKSAR Government, and grossly interferes in the affairs of Hong Kong. Such a political manoeuvre not only maliciously attacks the work of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) in the US on promoting normal economic and trade relations and cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and the US, but further advocates for their closure, severely damaging the normal economic and trade relations. The HKSAR refutes this action resolutely and condemns it strongly.

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 have been operating in accordance with local legislation and maintaining 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, and 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 benefits in Hong Kong. The US has realised a trade surplus of US\$271.5 billion with Hong Kong during 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 and the SNSO aims to, among others, improve the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for safeguarding national security in the HKSAR, as well as maintain the prosperity and stability of the HKSAR. The HKSAR Government will continue to resolutely, fully and faithfully implement the NSL and the SNSO 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.

Law enforcement actions taken by HKSAR law enforcement agencies, including those taken under the NSL, the SNSO and other Hong Kong laws, are based on evidence and strictly in accordance with the law, and have nothing to do with the occupation, background or political stance of the persons concerned. The Department of Justice (DoJ), by virtue of Article 63 of the Basic Law, controls criminal prosecutions free from any interference. Independent prosecutorial decisions for each case are made in a rigorous and objective manner, strictly based on evidence and applicable laws, and are in accordance with the Prosecution Code. Prosecutions would be instituted by the DoJ only if there is sufficient admissible evidence to support a reasonable prospect of conviction, and if it is in the public interest to do so.

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, and that the HKSAR shall be vested with independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication. The courts shall exercise judicial power independently, free from interference. The rule of law in Hong Kong is strong and robust, and withstands the test of time. The rule of law in Hong Kong is based on the institutional safeguards of the Basic Law and is the fruit of the collaborative efforts of the judicial sector and the legal profession of Hong Kong over the years, and has already taken root in the heart of every citizen in Hong Kong society. The HKSAR Government will continue to support the Judiciary in adjudicating cases independently in accordance with law and resolutely safeguard the rule of law in Hong Kong.