

# HKSAR Government strongly opposes misleading and baseless allegations by foreign entities on freedoms of the press and speech in Hong Kong

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) today (February 9) strongly condemned a totally erroneous statement issued by the United Kingdom Government in the name of a number of foreign entities under the so-called "Media Freedom Coalition" concerning the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law.

A spokesperson for the HKSAR Government said, "The HKSAR is proud of its unwavering commitment to the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, which underpin the city's success as an international business and financial centre. Under Article 25 of the Basic Law, all Hong Kong residents shall be equal before the law. It is baseless for the signatories to the statement to make such allegations that our authorities have targeted and suppressed independent media in the HKSAR since the enactment of the Hong Kong National Security Law.

"Since the city's reunification with the motherland, the HKSAR Government has been firmly committed to safeguarding the freedoms of the press and speech, both of which are protected under the Basic Law and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights. As a matter of fact, Article 4 of the Hong Kong National Security Law stipulates that such freedoms shall be protected in accordance with the law while safeguarding national security in the HKSAR."

The spokesperson added, "Foreign countries that have in their respective jurisdictions national security legislation which is more wide-ranging than the Hong Kong National Security Law are no doubt aware that according to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the exercising of the freedoms of the press and speech must comply with the restrictions of the law for reasons including protection of national security.

"We must reiterate that all law enforcement actions taken by Hong Kong law enforcement agencies under the Hong Kong National Security Law, or indeed any local legislation, are based on evidence, strictly according to the law and for the acts of the persons or entities concerned, and have nothing to do with their occupation, background or political stance. The law enforcement actions taken by the HKSAR Government against Stand News adhered to such fundamental principles.

"We must also point out that the media landscape in Hong Kong is as vibrant as ever. As a case in point, a total of 209 media organisations, be they based locally, in the Mainland or overseas, are registered with the HKSAR Government News and Media Information System of the Information Services Department at present, showing an increase after the implementation

of the Hong Kong National Security Law. As always, the media can exercise their right to monitor the HKSAR Government's work, and their freedom of commenting on or even criticising government policies remains uninhibited as long as this is not in violation of the law.

"We express our deep regret and must rebuke those foreign entities for signing a 'media freedom-related' statement that contained no more than the usual fact-twisting and opinionated attacks against the Hong Kong National Security Law since its promulgation for implementation in the HKSAR upon the passage by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on June 30, 2020. Contrary to their allegations, the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law has restored stability in society and the people of Hong Kong are no longer threatened or intimidated by acts or activities endangering national security or their everyday life."