

HKSARG expresses utter dismay at irresponsible remarks by US and EU officials

A spokesman of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (July 31) expresses deep regret and utter dismay at some irresponsible remarks made by officials of the United States (US) State Department and the European Union (EU)'s office on foreign affairs and security policy on the conviction and sentencing handed down by the Court of First Instance of the HKSAR against an offender under the National Security Law.

"Hong Kong prides herself on the rule of law; our robust legal system premised on the common law and the independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication, are cornerstone of Hong Kong's success and have been well recognised around the world. As provided for under the Basic Law, judges of the courts of the HKSAR shall be chosen on the basis of their judicial and professional qualities and may be recruited from other common law jurisdictions; they exercise judicial power independently, free from any interference.

"We deeply regret and reject remarks by officials from the US and the EU which were blatantly trampling on Hong Kong's judicial strengths, let alone their usual politically motivated interference into the internal affairs of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China."

The spokesman pointed out that in this case, the defendant has been convicted after a fair and open trial presided over by three judges of the High Court. The facts of the case and the court's considerations in determining the sentence are clearly set out in written judgements which are accessible by everyone under Hong Kong's open and transparent judicial system. Regrettably, all these have been brushed aside by the said foreign officials.

"Every country has a right to safeguard national security and take resolute actions against any offences. We are shocked to hear repeatedly from officials in the US and EU governments since enactment of the National Security Law that such an essential piece of legislation was being abused in Hong Kong without any evidence or substantiation. Their unjustified stance on Hong Kong matters clearly shows their arrogance and double standards.

"The National Security Law clearly stipulates four types of offences endangering national security and the penalties. Law-abiding people will not unwittingly fall foul of the law. After the implementation of the National Security Law, Hong Kong people's rights and freedoms under the Basic Law as well as the relevant provisions of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as applied to Hong Kong continue to be protected. Among

others, the media and the general public continue to exercise their right to monitor the Government's work and the freedom of criticising policies. There is no basis for the US and the EU to suggest that Hong Kong people's rights and freedom have been undermined.

"We urge the US and EU authorities to respect the rule of law and refrain from making any attempt to influence our courts in exercising their independent judicial power. Such contemptuous behaviours are detrimental to bilateral or multilateral relationship with the HKSAR on a wide range of subjects of mutual concern and benefits," the spokesman said.