

ICAC safeguards anti-corruption achievements, advances towards new milestone in year of fruitful endeavours and accomplishments

The following press release is issued on behalf of the Independent Commission Against Corruption:

The ICAC noted in its latest annual report issued today (July 10) that 2023 was "a year of fruitful endeavours and accomplishments" as the Commission advanced towards its golden jubilee. The ICAC sought to safeguard the remarkable achievements made in the past 50 years in combating corruption, contribute to the country's "Belt and Road" Initiative, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development strategy and the advancement of the global anti-corruption cause by synergising the tripartite partnership formed with the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA) and the Hong Kong International Academy Against Corruption (HKIAAC).

Tabling the 2023 ICAC Annual Report at the Legislative Council today, the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Corruption and legislator, Mr Martin Liao, commended and thanked ICAC officers for steadfastly carrying out the anti-corruption mission through the years, continuously bringing the anti-corruption work of Hong Kong to new heights.

Mr Liao noted that the fruitful achievements made by the ICAC in the past 50 years were reflected in the findings of ICAC Annual Surveys and continued recognitions from the international community.

According to the newly published 2023 ICAC Annual Survey, members of the public continued to show zero tolerance to corruption. On a rating scale of 0 to 10, of which 0 represented total rejection and 10 total tolerance of corruption, the mean score for 2023 was 0.3. Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority (96.7 per cent) of respondents believed that integrity was important for Hong Kong's development, indicating that the core value of integrity was deeply rooted in Hong Kong.

In addition, 98.9 per cent of respondents said they had not personally encountered corruption in the past year. Similar findings were recorded in the past 10 years, reflecting that Hong Kong was a very clean society.

On the international front, Hong Kong ranked 14th out of 180 countries and territories rated in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2023 released by the Transparency International. In the World Justice Project's 2023 Rule of Law Index, Hong Kong ranked 9th under the factor of "absence of corruption" out of 142 countries/territories. These rankings not only reflected Hong

Kong's effective anti-corruption work, but also the city's sound rule of law.

Meanwhile, in the newly issued World Competitiveness Yearbook 2024, Hong Kong's competitiveness improved by two places to 5th among 67 economies. Under the indicator "bribery and corruption do not exist", Hong Kong jumped six places to 4th from 10th last year, topping the Asia-Pacific region. The result reflected that enterprises and investors were confident of Hong Kong's business environment and anti-corruption work.

In the 2023 ICAC Annual Report, the ICAC Commissioner, Mr Woo Ying-ming, noted that the year was "a year of fruitful endeavours and accomplishments". The Commission leveraged Hong Kong's unique advantage of being "backed by the motherland and connected to the world" in fostering closer collaboration with anti-corruption counterparts worldwide and embarking on a new chapter in global graft fight.

Last year, the ICAC fostered a closer co-operation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Apart from hosting an anti-corruption workshop for members of the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Network) in Vienna, the Commission also organised a training programme for GlobE Network in Hong Kong in February this year. The ICAC and UNODC also jointly developed the "Global Policy Guide for Strengthening Youth Engagement in Anti-Corruption Initiatives", which served as a practical reference for anti-graft agencies around the world to promote youth engagement in the fight against corruption.

To further contribute to the national and global anti-corruption cause, the HKIAAC was conceived last year and pilot courses were organised for a number of overseas anti-corruption agencies. Upon its official establishment this February, a robust tripartite partnership was formed amongst the ICAC, the HKIAAC and the IAACA, of which the ICAC Commissioner, Mr Woo Ying-ming, serves as President to promote global anti-corruption collaboration. Moreover, the ICAC maintained close liaison with the National Commission of Supervision and played an active role in promoting the integrity building in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

"This new strategy will bring the ICAC's work to the next level, solidifying Hong Kong's reputation as a city of probity and providing solid support for Hong Kong's advancement from stability to prosperity whereby Hong Kong can make substantial contribution to the country's development and continue to tell the good stories of China, 'One Country, Two Systems' and our city to the international community," Mr Woo noted.

ICAC's determination to forge ahead against all difficulties to combat corruption with its holistic "three-pronged" strategy has helped maintain Hong Kong as one of the cleanest places in the world. Last year, the corruption situation in Hong Kong continued to remain well under control. The Commission received 2 001 non-election related corruption complaints. Although the figure registered an increase of 9 per cent compared with 2022, the number represented a drop of 13 per cent when compared to the pre-pandemic period in 2019. The rise was mainly due to the gradual recovery of

Hong Kong's economic activities after the pandemic, as evidenced in a corresponding increase of complaints concerning the private sector.

Building Management, Finance and Insurance, and the Construction Industry were the three private sector industries attracting most complaints. Last year, the ICAC smashed the largest corruption case over building maintenance and launched the new "Corruption Prevention Guide for Property Management Companies" to assist property management companies to effectively prevent corruption and enhance anti-graft capabilities.

To promote integrity management in the construction industry, the ICAC teamed up with the Development Bureau and the Construction Industry Council to launch an anti-corruption summit. The ICAC had also strengthened co-operation with regulatory agencies in the financial and insurance industries to leverage synergy and consolidate Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre.

Civil service in the public sector remained clean. The ICAC would continue to collaborate with the Civil Service Bureau to implement the Ethical Leadership Programme. To deepen the integrity culture in government departments, the ICAC would also conduct exchanges with senior to directorate civil servants in courses organised by the Civil Service College. During the year, the ICAC conducted 65 assignment reports for government departments and public bodies to plug corruption loopholes.

The ICAC adopted an "all-embracing" education and publicity strategy to ensure the 2023 Rural Ordinary Election and the 2023 District Council Ordinary Elections were conducted in a fair, open and just manner.

"Over the past 50 years, the ICAC has been demonstrating its extraordinary strength by fighting corruption unwaveringly without fear or favour. As the Commission looks to the next 50 years, the organisation will continue to make relentless efforts, leaving no foothold for corruption and ensure that corruption has nowhere to run, and their illicit proceeds have no place to hide. The ICAC will continue to strive to keep Hong Kong prosperous, stable, clean and fair," Mr Woo noted.

2023 ICAC Annual Report: www.icac.org.hk/icac/annual-report/2023/

Findings of 2023 ICAC Annual

Survey: www.icac.org.hk/en/about/report/survey/finding/index.html