

LC: Speech by CS in presenting Government Minute in response to Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2023

Following is the speech (translated from Chinese) by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, in presenting the Government Minute in response to the Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2023 in the Legislative Council today (December 6):

Mr President,

The Annual Report of The Ombudsman 2023 was submitted to the Legislative Council on July 12 this year. Today, the Government submits the Government Minute responding to the recommendations as set out in the Annual Report.

In 2022-23, the Office of The Ombudsman received a total of more than 5 000 complaint cases, on par with the number of last year. Due to the outbreak of the fifth wave of the COVID-19 epidemic in early 2022, there were more complaints relating to handling of the epidemic during the year.

In the Annual Report, The Ombudsman summed up nine direct investigation and 141 full investigation cases, making 211 recommendations in total. The Government Minute has responded in detail to all the recommendations. The vast majority of the recommendations were accepted, and the relevant government departments and public bodies have taken or are actively taking follow-up actions. As for the one case where the relevant government department and The Ombudsman have different views, the authority concerned has already explained the reasons to The Ombudsman and provided a detailed account in the Government Minute.

As reflected in the Annual Report, more than half of the 141 full investigation cases were found to be unsubstantiated. Nevertheless, The Ombudsman has made recommendations regarding some of these cases to facilitate relevant government departments and public bodies to improve their administration. We will actively follow up on The Ombudsman's valuable advice in order to make continuous improvements to the quality of public services.

On access to information, over 10 900 requests for information made under the Code on Access to Information (the Code) from members of the public were received by government departments in 2022-23, representing an increase of about 4 per cent as compared to the previous year. Since the promulgation of the Code, 94 per cent of the cases were provided with all the information requested and 3 per cent were provided with part of the information requested. The number of complaints concerning the Code received during the year was 67, representing a decrease of over 20 per cent as compared to the figure of last year. The Ombudsman also pointed out in the Annual Report that government departments have become more conversant with the application of

the Code. I am glad to hear a decrease in the number of complaints concerning the Code, as well as The Ombudsman's positive comment about the relevant work of the Government.

In 2022-23, the Office successfully mediated 305 complaints, which is a record high. Various government departments and public bodies will continue to work with the Office to promote mediation so as to resolve disputes between both parties to a complaint efficiently, thereby achieving a win-win situation.

In addition, the Office continued to organise the Presentation Ceremony of The Ombudsman's Awards in November 2022 and presented awards to four government departments and 61 public officers to commend their exemplary performance in serving the community. The Ombudsman pointed out in the Annual Report that the current-term Government's endeavours are starting to bear fruit in some areas such as street obstruction and shopfront extension. I am pleased to learn that the hard work and efforts of public officers have received recognition and credit from the public. We will continue to strive for the best in enhancing the quality of public services.

Since the current-term Government took office more than one year ago, we have made concerted effort with members of the public and led Hong Kong out of the epidemic with society returning to full normalcy. We have also enhanced governance on various fronts by strengthening co-ordination and improving the civil service management system. We will continue to embrace a result-oriented governance culture and enhance the standard of public administration of government departments and public bodies with a view to building a better Hong Kong.

Thank you, Mr President.