

Public consultation on Basic Law Article 23 legislation concluded

The public consultation on Basic Law Article 23 legislation launched by the Security Bureau on January 30, 2024 concluded yesterday (February 28).

Since the commencement of the public consultation, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government had held nearly 30 consultation sessions to meet with representatives from various sectors to give them detailed briefings on the proposals in the consultation document, and to take the initiative to address the concerns of attendees on specific issues and garner their support. About 3 000 people participated in the consultation sessions, covering representatives from such sectors as local and international businesses, legal, financial, education, media and other professions. Representatives of national organisations, district personalities, political parties and relevant organisations as well as Consuls-General also attended the sessions. A majority of the participants indicated their support for the legislation.

To enable the public to gain a clearer understanding of the legislative proposals and refute false information, various publicity items (e.g. leaflets, thematic webpage, infographics and Announcements in the Public Interest) were launched to better visualise the content of the consultation document. The Secretary for Justice and the Secretary for Security also participated in a series of media interviews by TV stations, radio stations, newspapers and online media during the consultation period to explain in greater depth areas of public concerns.

A spokesman for the Security Bureau said, "While it takes time to take stock of the number of views received at the end, according to the preliminary figures as at 11.59pm yesterday (February 28), the HKSAR Government received a total of 13 147 submissions during the consultation period, which are mainly by email, post and fax. Among them, 12 969 (98.64 per cent of the total) show support and make positive comments; while 85 (0.65 per cent of the total) purely contain questions or opinions therein that cannot reflect the authors' stance and 93 (0.71 per cent of the total) oppose the legislative proposals, amongst them over 10 are overseas anti-China organisations or abscondees. The aforementioned result has indicated that the legislative proposals have gained majority support from the public. On the other hand, views received cover different aspects of the legislative proposals while some offered views on safeguarding national security beyond what is covered in the proposals of the consultation document. These would serve as valuable reference in the process of drafting the bill."

In addition, organisations and bodies from various sectors and professions showed their staunch support for the HKSAR Government's legislative work through open statements, bylined articles, joint letters and more, amounting to 512 as at February 27. Some of the statements were directly submitted to the HKSAR Government as responses to the consultation

document.

"The HKSAR Government would like to express gratitude to members of the public for their active participation in the public consultation, and is pleased that society has reached consensus to complete the legislation as early as possible. We are encouraged by the proactive expression of support for the legislation work by various sectors, which demonstrates a strong ambience to support the Basic Law Article 23 legislation in the society," the spokesman said.

The HKSAR Government will work in full steam to consolidate the results of the public consultation and report to the joint meeting of the Panel on Security and the Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services of the Legislative Council (LegCo). By making reference to the views received, it will also strive to finalise the Safeguarding National Security Bill soonest for introduction to the LegCo. During the legislative process, the HKSAR Government will continue to brief various sectors proactively, take the initiative to disseminate further information in relation to the legislation through different channels, and refute groundless attacks and smears on the Basic Law Article 23 legislation to set the record straight and protect the public from being misled. In the next stage, the HKSAR Government will proactively facilitate the work of the LegCo to complete the legislative work as early as possible to cope with the constant national security risks and threats, and safeguard public safety, allowing Hong Kong to focus entirely on economic development and maintain prosperity and stability.