

Seminar on National Security for Trade Unions concludes (with video)

The Registry of Trade Unions (RTU) of the Labour Department organised the Seminar on National Security for Trade Unions (the Seminar) today (April 13) to enhance the understanding by trade union officers, paid staff and members about their obligation of safeguarding national security when launching trade union activities to protect and improve the employment rights and benefits of employees. The Seminar was co-organised by the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (HKFTU).

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, remarked that the Seminar was held at an opportune time of particular significance, as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government fulfilled the constitutional responsibility and historic mission of legislating for Article 23 of the Basic Law by promulgating the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO) in the Gazette for implementation three weeks ago. The annual National Security Education Day will fall on the day after tomorrow (April 15), and this year marks the tenth anniversary of General Secretary Xi Jinping's proposal of the holistic view of national security.

Mr Sun pointed out that both the Hong Kong National Security Law (HKNSL) and the SNSO uphold the principle that human rights should be respected and protected, and that the rights and freedoms which HKSAR residents enjoy under the Basic Law, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the rights and freedoms of forming and joining trade unions, should be protected in accordance with the law. Nonetheless, the aforementioned international covenants also expressly state that such rights are not absolute, and may be subject to restrictions provided by law which are necessary in the interests of national security, public safety, public order or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. Any institution, organisation and individual in the HKSAR shall abide by the HKNSL and the SNSO. Moreover, the operations of trade unions shall also comply with the Trade Unions Ordinance (TUO) and their constitutions registered with the RTU, etc.

Mr Sun added that according to the experience of the RTU, most trade unions promote the employment rights and benefits of their members in accordance with the TUO and their constitutions. As evidenced by the increase in the number of registered trade unions from nearly 920 as at end-2019 to over 1 400 as at end-2023, Hong Kong residents' rights and freedoms to form and join trade unions have been fully preserved.

Keynote speakers at the Seminar included the former Vice-chairperson of the HKSAR Basic Law Committee of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Ms Maria Tam; Legislative Council Member and the President of the HKFTU, Mr Stanley Ng; the Chairman of the Macao Federation of Trade Unions, Mr Lee Chong-cheng; and the Registrar of Trade Unions, Miss Christine

But. They briefed the participants on the relationships among the Basic Law, the HKNSL, the SNSO, the TUO and trade unions, and shared their views on the development of trade union activities after the implementation of the HKNSL and the SNSO. Moreover, Legislative Council Member and the Chairman of the HKFTU, Mr Kingsley Wong, hosted a panel discussion session for exchanges among speakers; Legislative Council Member and Chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong and Kowloon Labour Unions, Mr Lam Chun-sing, as well as representatives of civil service organisations. The RTU will continue to publicise messages about safeguarding national security to trade unions through educational activities in future.

The Seminar attracted around 270 participants.