

Speech by CE at 8th ICAC Symposium (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the 8th ICAC Symposium today (May 22):

Honourable Deputy Secretary Fu Kui (Deputy Secretary of Communist Party of China Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and Vice Chairman of National Commission of Supervision), Honourable Director Zheng Yanxiong (Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)), Honourable Director Dong Jingwei (Head of the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR), Commissioner Cui Jianchun (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR), Deputy Political Commissar Wang Zhaobing (Deputy Political Commissar of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Hong Kong Garrison), Executive Director Ghada Waly (Executive Director of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), Commissioner Woo Ying-ming (Commissioner of ICAC), Consuls-general, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to you all. It is a great pleasure to be here today to open this eighth ICAC Symposium, and to welcome each and every one of you – more than 500 high-profile professionals from 60 jurisdictions from six continents. You are anti-corruption law enforcers and experts, judges, prosecutors, legal practitioners, government regulators and officials, academics and more.

You are here, over these next three days, to hear and consider promising ways forward under the theme of "Charting a New Path to Combat Corruption". You are here, as well, for the 11th Annual Conference of the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities.

Despite your wide-ranging backgrounds, your goal is shared: how best to prevent and combat corruption, a problem that impedes the development, stability and well-being of societies and peoples around the world.

This Symposium is co-hosted by Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption, the ICAC, and the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities.

As you all know, our ICAC is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. For half a century, the ICAC has championed the fight against corruption in Hong Kong. It has also worked closely with its counterparts around the world to tackle corruption. Indeed, the ICAC currently holds the presidency of the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities.

Under the unique "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong maintains a robust regulatory regime in line with international standards, and is renowned globally for its clean and efficient government, level-

playing field for doing business, sound rule of law, a judiciary with independent judicial power, and zero tolerance for corruption. We are also at the forefront of the international fight against corruption.

International surveys consistently confirm Hong Kong's success in tackling corruption. The World Justice Project rated us ninth, overall, in "absence of corruption", out of more than 140 jurisdictions in 2023. Similarly, Hong Kong was ranked 14th out of 180 countries and territories in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index last year. These and other standings underscore Hong Kong's clean governance, as well as the ICAC's laudable anti-corruption efforts.

The people of Hong Kong substantiate these findings. The latest ICAC Annual Survey shows that Hong Kong citizens have a zero tolerance for corruption, with 98 per cent of survey respondents indicating that they had not personally encountered corruption in the past 12 months.

It is a priority of the Hong Kong SAR Government to sustain our pioneering role in combating corruption. We are pleased, and proud, to back the ICAC in widening its international network and co-operating with overseas counterparts.

We are committed, as well, to ensuring that our legal framework and anti-corruption institutions, as well as public and private sector governance, reflect the highest international obligations and standards, particularly those set out in the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

China, our country, has designated the ICAC as an authority under the Convention, helping other economies under the Convention develop and implement preventive measures. And the ICAC, in its work as president of the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities since 2022, has overseen the Association's membership soar from 120 agencies in different countries and regions to more than 170 now. This phenomenal growth has allowed the Association to extend its work internationally.

In just a moment, the ICAC will conclude the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the UN (United Nations) Office on Drugs and Crime and the anti-corruption authorities of Kazakhstan, Mauritius, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

The presence of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, as guardian of the Convention, and the national anti-corruption authorities of various countries here in Hong Kong to finalise bilateral agreements with the ICAC, exemplify the international co-operation and exchange that can make a difference, regionally and globally.

I congratulate the signatories on their impressive progress, and I look forward to more anti-graft partnerships between Hong Kong and other international jurisdictions.

Ladies and gentlemen, corruption knows no boundaries. It is a plague on

different economies, institutions and communities. It has a disrupting, and dispiriting, impact on every aspect of people's lives. Everyone here is fully aware of that overwhelming reality, because everyone here is working, hard, smart and relentlessly, to overcome it.

In marking International Anti-Corruption Day, last December, the United Nations reiterated that "only through co-operation and the involvement of each and every person and institution, can we overcome the negative impact of this crime."

And it's why this Symposium was initiated, 24 years ago: to bring economies, governments, institutions and businesses together, imbued with the indomitable spirit that we will – that we must – prevail.

â€‹Your participation in this Symposium speaks of our collective determination.

I'm grateful to the ICAC for once again organising this important international gathering.

I wish you all three days of inspired Symposium sessions and intelligence insights, of rewarding networking and future collaborations.

And when you need a break, Hong Kong is waiting for you. Hong Kong is way more than an international business centre with a clean government. This is, after all, a world city – and the East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. It is a city where you work hard and also play hard.

Enjoy your time in Hong Kong! Thank you.