

Speech by CE at International Communication Forum: "Towards a fairer, safer world" (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the International Communication Forum: "Towards a fairer, safer world" today (November 2):

Deputy Director Lu Xinning of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Deputy Commissioner Yang Yirui of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR, Dr Herman Hu, Chairman of Friday Culture Limited, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. Typhoon No. 8, you are all working hard! It is my great pleasure to join you all today at this forum organised by Friday Culture Limited and the Hong Kong Coalition.

First of all, I think the theme of the forum today is very well thought out. The theme is "Towards a fairer, safer world". Fairness and safety are important values well treasured and protected by Hong Kong, by our legal system and, most of all, by the "one country, two systems" principle.

This year, as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland, we also celebrate the 25th anniversary of the successful implementation of "one country, two systems".

In his opening speech for the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that the policy of "one country, two systems" has proven to be the best institutional arrangement for ensuring sustained prosperity and stability in Hong Kong after our return to the motherland, and must be adhered to over the long term.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law form the constitutional basis of the Hong Kong SAR. Hong Kong is committed to the rule of law, and our long-standing common law tradition and independent judicial power are protected by the Basic Law.

The protection of the rights and freedoms enjoyed by the people of Hong Kong, including freedom of the press and speech, is enshrined in the Basic Law. Everyone in Hong Kong, regardless of profession and belief, enjoys the same right to embrace the development of our home, so long as he or she genuinely supports the principle of "one country, two systems", loves Hong Kong, and abides by the Basic Law and the other laws of Hong Kong. This, I am

proud to say, is why we are a fair society.

With rights come responsibility. Hong Kong people enjoy a level playing field that champions fairness, and have the responsibility to safeguard its values. This brings me to safety.

To look into this important topic in context, it would be useful to revisit a few fundamental principles. First and foremost, the Hong Kong SAR is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China. It is a local administrative region which enjoys a high degree of autonomy and comes directly under the Central People's Government. Safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests is the constitutional requirement of the Hong Kong SAR, the duty of the Hong Kong SAR Government, and also in the interest of all Hong Kong residents.

What possible impact could Hong Kong have on the safety of our country? Just take a look back at the series of events in Hong Kong over the past decade to realise the answer.

The illegal "Occupy Movement" in 2014. The Mong Kok riot in 2016. And in 2019, the large-scale riots coupled with advocacy for "Hong Kong independence" and the relentless interference by foreign forces.

These were but a few examples of the devastating result arising from loopholes in our system, exploited by those who crossed the line and tried to sabotage "one country, two systems". They threatened our country's sovereignty and security and defied the authority of the Central People's Government and the Basic Law.

It was against this background that the National Security Law was enacted by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in 2020. This was followed by the improvement of Hong Kong's electoral system, ensuring the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong" is upheld. These swift and decisive moves by the Central Authorities serve to prevent, stop and punish acts and activities that seriously threaten the country's sovereignty and security. These significant steps have effectively restored order and stability. They have also restored the enjoyment of rights and freedoms for the people of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong now continues to be an open, safe, vibrant and business-friendly metropolis, and is back on the right course of "one country, two systems". The unique and innovative principle of "one country, two systems" has ensured that Hong Kong has the strong support of the country while staying connected to the rest of the world. We are all set for making greater contributions to the country.

But we should not be complacent about the status quo and stop there. In fact, even after the implementation of the National Security Law, there are still underlying national security threats from different fronts.

Dissemination of wrongful messages andslandering accusations can still

be seen at home and abroad. I must stress that attempts to glorify violence and weaken the rule of law has no place in any law-abiding city. Hong Kong is no exception and we will do everything we can to ensure such actions do not tarnish our hard-earned effort in restoring law and order.

As committed in my Policy Address announced two weeks ago, we must stay alert to threats and dangers, adopt bottom-line thinking, and sustain our efforts in safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests. To build and maintain a solid foundation for security, we have to continue our efforts in four major aspects.

First, on law enforcement and intelligence. Our law enforcement agencies will take investigatory and law enforcement actions against acts and activities endangering national security. We will step up efforts in gathering and analysing intelligence related to national security and counter-terrorism, in particular online information and counter-spying intelligence.

Second, to strengthen public education and publicity. A correct understanding of our country, including but not limited to the National Security Law, will greatly enhance Hong Kong people's resilience against instigation or incitement by people, organisations or countries with ulterior motives. This starts from education for our very young.

That is why we will strengthen national education in schools to enhance students' sense of national identity and national pride, which could in turn raise their awareness of safeguarding our country's security. We will encourage schools to review their curricula and organise national education activities. Teachers are required to uphold professional conduct. The youth uniformed groups of our disciplined services will be given dedicated training. All these are done to help nurture a generation of law-abiding citizens who love the country and Hong Kong.

Third, to strengthen our legislation. We will do good and comprehensive preparatory work for the fulfilment of our responsibilities under Article 23 of the Basic Law. We will conduct thorough research to prepare effective, pragmatic and practicable solutions to address national security risks and threats, past and present. The solutions are also expected to be sufficiently forward-looking to address potential risks.

Lastly, to tell the good Hong Kong story well. Much of the misperception towards Hong Kong by people overseas was the result of the spreading of fake news with ill intent. The Government will robustly react to wrong or misleading information. More importantly, we will be proactive and make good use of our discourse power to tell the world all the good and true stories of Hong Kong. Later this month, I will be traveling to Bangkok to attend the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, and will surely be telling the world how good Hong Kong is, how this Asia's World City is back on stage again!

Ladies and gentlemen, the forum today is about a fairer and safer world. Yet the world today is undergoing profound changes unseen in a

century. The COVID-19 pandemic, high inflation, interest rate hikes, trade disputes, geopolitical tensions and military conflicts. All of these have created uncertainties, and, in turn, weakened the growth momentum of the global economy. Fairness and safety in the world is not as commonly seen as before.

But as I stated in my Policy Address, Hong Kong faces both opportunities and challenges, but there are more opportunities than challenges. The next five years are important for Hong Kong to break new grounds and achieve another leap forward. With the support of the Hong Kong community and all of you, we can do our part in developing a fairer and safer society. We can continue to succeed in ensuring the resolute, full and faithful implementation of the policy of "one country, two systems". We will contribute to protecting the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of our country, and contribute to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

With that, I wish this forum every success and all of you a fruitful afternoon. Thank you.

