

Speech by CE at reception in celebration of 23rd anniversary of establishment of HKSAR

Following is the translation of the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the reception in celebration of the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre this morning (July 1):

Distinguished guests, fellow citizens,

Today marks the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC). It is a day of great historical significance and it gives me much pleasure to celebrate the occasion with you together.

First of all, the national anthem of the PRC that we played and sang at the flag-raising ceremony this morning and at the beginning of this reception is protected by the National Anthem Ordinance of the HKSAR. Like the national flag and the national emblem, the national anthem is the symbol and sign of the nation. As an inalienable part of our country, the HKSAR is duty-bound to preserve the dignity of the national anthem through legislation. The HKSAR Government introduced the National Anthem Bill into the Legislative Council (LegCo) in January 2019. After 18 months of deliberation, the Bill was eventually passed by the LegCo on June 4 this year. It came into effect upon publication in the Gazette on June 12.

The National Anthem Ordinance provides for the playing and singing, protection and promotion of the national anthem to preserve the dignity of the country, enhance the sense of national identity among citizens and promote patriotism. The offences stipulated in the Ordinance only concern the misuse of the national anthem, or public and intentional acts with an intent to insult the national anthem.

While it is important for us to respect and protect the national anthem, safeguarding national security is of even greater importance as this concerns the unity, territorial integrity and development interests of our country and is closely related to the livelihood of our people. Yesterday, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress passed the Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (the National Security Law in Hong Kong). The national law was added to Annex III to the Basic Law and started to be applied in Hong Kong by way of promulgation by the HKSAR Government on the same day.

The enactment of the national law is regarded as the most significant development in the relationship between the Central Authorities and the HKSAR since Hong Kong's return to the Motherland. It is a historical step to

improve the system for Hong Kong to safeguard our country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security. It is also an essential and timely decision for restoring stability in Hong Kong. The significance of this decision is multifaceted. It shows that the Central Government is determined to restore stability in Hong Kong, after a year of escalating violence and riots since last June. It shows that the Central Government is determined to protect the vast majority of law-abiding citizens in Hong Kong from the minority who attempted to undermine national security. It also shows that the Central Government is determined to preserve and better "One Country, Two Systems", a principle underlying Hong Kong's stability and prosperity since the HKSAR was established 23 years ago.

Over the past month or so, in the face of all sorts of smearing and malicious attacks by foreign and local bodies and individuals against the enactment of the National Security Law in Hong Kong at the state level, government officials and legal experts in the Mainland, my governing team and I, local business and political leaders as well as various sectors in the community have explained from various perspectives that it is constitutional, lawful, reasonable and rational for the Central Government to introduce the National Security Law in Hong Kong. The Law will neither undermine the high degree of autonomy, the judicial independence and the rule of law in Hong Kong, nor will it affect the legitimate rights and interests of Hong Kong people. It targets an extremely small minority of people who commit four types of crimes that seriously threaten national security as provided in the Law, namely secession, subversion of state power, organisation and carrying out of terrorist activities, and collusion with foreign or external forces to endanger national security. It serves to protect the life and property, basic rights and freedoms of the overwhelming majority of our citizens. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who have spoken openly for the National Security Law in Hong Kong and the some three million people who have signed in support of the Law online and on the street.

The enactment of the National Security Law in Hong Kong is a turning point to take Hong Kong out of the current impasse and to restore stability and order from the chaos. The HKSAR Government will do its utmost and remain steadfast in its duties to fulfil the primary responsibility of implementing the National Security Law in Hong Kong. I will soon set up a committee on safeguarding national security in the HKSAR which will fully collaborate with the Central Government's office for safeguarding national security in Hong Kong to ensure that the legislative objectives of the National Security Law in Hong Kong are achieved and that the mechanism for safeguarding national security will be established and improved to guarantee the continued success of "One Country, Two Systems" in Hong Kong and the long-term prosperity and stability of our city.

The implementation of the National Anthem Ordinance and the National Security Law in Hong Kong signifies the fulfilment of the constitutional responsibility of the HKSAR to better the institution of "One Country, Two Systems" and to bring the relationship between "One Country" and "Two Systems" back on the right track. However, to ensure that members of the

public respect the national anthem of their own volition and safeguard national security wholeheartedly, public promotion and school education are of utmost importance. The relevant departments of the HKSAR Government will collaborate with different sectors of society and provide them with the necessary resources in order to carry out the related work properly.

As I said at my Inaugural Ceremony three years ago, "hope propels a society forward, and confidence is the foundation of hope." The past year has been the toughest challenge in my forty years of public service. Not only have I faced unprecedented personal attacks, but I was also worried about the future of Hong Kong. I am extremely grateful to the Central Government for its trust in me, to my family and close friends for their unreserved love and to colleagues at all levels for their staunch support. Their care and concern has given me strength amidst difficult times and faith that better days will prevail. Similarly, after one whole year of social and political unrest, we should be confident that Hong Kong will emerge stronger after stability is restored.

In the coming two years, leading the HKSAR Government out of the current political predicament, overcoming the post-epidemic challenges, reviving the economy, restoring Hong Kong's international reputation, rebuilding the relationship between the Government and our young people, and re-establishing social order are no easy tasks. However, as long as we all make Hong Kong our home, and are willing to put aside our differences and move on, I believe that there are always more solutions than problems and that Hong Kong can definitely build a better future.

May all of you have a happy festive day!