

Speech by CS at International Ombudsman Summit 2024 (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, at the International Ombudsman Summit 2024 today (December 3):

Director-General Cai (Director-General of the Department of International Cooperation of the National Commission of Supervision of the People's Republic of China, Mr Cai Wei), Deputy Commissioner Fang (Deputy Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Mr Fang Jianming), President Benalilou (First Vice President of the International Ombudsman Institute, Mr Mohamed Benalilou), President Qureshi (President of the Asian Ombudsman Association, Mr Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi), Mr Chan (Ombudsman of Hong Kong, Mr Jack Chan), Consuls-General, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I am delighted to welcome you to Hong Kong and the International Ombudsman Summit, which brings together some 140 ombudsmen and other senior players from ombudsman offices around the world.

You are here, in Hong Kong, because you are committed to the principles of fairness, accountability and transparency. Because you are eager to hear from high-profile speakers and your international colleagues about the latest developments and best practices in this critical area of public administration.

You are here, too, I am pleased to add, to help us celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Hong Kong Office of The Ombudsman.

Hong Kong is proud to host this global gathering – to welcome you and the invaluable experience you bring to this Summit. We have long acknowledged the importance of the Office of The Ombudsman and its essential role in Hong Kong's administration, our economy and our community.

The "one country, two systems" principle is the foundation of Hong Kong's governance and approach to the world. "One country, two systems" creates singular opportunities with our country, China, and enables us to do business and build connections and people-to-people ties with the world at large.

Hong Kong has much to offer the world, East and West. Our judiciary is independent, we practise the rule of law, believe in efficient government and a simple and low tax system. We are blessed with modern infrastructure, a world-class financial and professional services sector, and, yes, an internationally respected Office of The Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman serves as a bridge between the people of Hong Kong and the Government. It demands that we learn from history and that we anticipate the challenges ahead.

Those challenges have expanded, hand in hand – or should I say screen in hand – with the rapid advances of technology, the complexities of global interdependence, and the ever-evolving expectations of our citizens, who look to today's ombudsmen as custodians of the past, guardians of the present and architects of the future.

It is a demanding remit, but I am pleased to say that the Office of The Ombudsman in Hong Kong is committed to realising that responsibility. More than half of the Office's 120 employees are investigators, let me add.

And, as Chief Secretary for Administration, it is my responsibility to submit responses to the Ombudsman's recommendations – on behalf of the Government – to our Legislative Council.

Last year, the Office handled some 4 400 complaint cases. Through 95 full investigations and 10 completed direct investigation operations, the Office made 186 recommendations to various government bureaux and departments.

I welcome them, each and every one of them. They were made to improve the quality and the standards of public administration in Hong Kong. And to ensure the public that we are committed to accountability through independent, objective and impartial investigations.

We are also very much open to celebrations here in Hong Kong. As mentioned, this year is the 35th anniversary of the Office of The Ombudsman in Hong Kong. Since its establishment, the Office has been steadfast in driving a fair, efficient and accountable public administration, identifying areas that the Administration can improve in with sound recommendations.

I am pleased to congratulate the Office of The Ombudsman for 35 years of dedicated work and painstaking efforts on behalf of Hong Kong.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you all a rewarding Summit, and the best of health, and business, in the coming year. And I know you will enjoy all that Hong Kong, Asia's world city, has to offer you.

Thank you.

