

## SFST's speech at Gala Dinner hosted by UAE Ambassador to China (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, at the Gala Dinner hosted by the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to China today (January 23):

Your Excellency Al Hammadi (Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to China, Mr Hussain Bin Ibrahim Al Hammadi), ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to join you tonight at this dinner. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to the Consulate General of the United Arab Emirates for extending this invitation to me. Furthermore, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the United Arab Emirates on successfully hosting COP28, a significant milestone in the progress towards combating climate change.

The year 2023 concluded with a glimmer of hope for all those dedicated to achieving the climate goals set forth at COP28. The Hong Kong SAR Government was delighted to have our Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury and Commissioner for Climate Change as representatives joining the Chinese delegation at COP28 in Dubai. Throughout the conference, the world witnessed several groundbreaking agreements that united global efforts to combat climate change, building upon the achievements of previous conferences. We deeply appreciate the remarkable pronouncements and key commitments made at COP28, including the establishment of a specific target to triple renewables and double energy efficiency by 2030, the conclusion of the Loss and Damage Fund, the launch of the Industrial Transition Accelerator, and various climate discussions aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These achievements have ushered the world into a new era of climate action, reflecting our unwavering determination to achieve net-zero emissions.

Hong Kong will be part of the global efforts and we are committed to contributing to the global climate goals. The Hong Kong SAR Government has allocated approximately HK\$240 billion to implement various measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation in the next 15 to 20 years, with the aim of achieving carbon neutrality before 2050.

We are eager to leverage our unique advantages in developing Hong Kong as a global green finance hub. As a leading green bond centre in Asia, we strive to provide a high-quality green financing platform for international issuers including those from the countries and regions along the Belt and Road Initiative. We lead by example and since 2019, the Government has issued approximately US\$24 billion of green bonds under the Government Green Bond Programme. On the overall growth of the market, the total volume of green and sustainable debt (including bonds and loans) issued in Hong Kong increased by over 40 per cent from 2021 to reach US\$80.5 billion in 2022. Hong Kong

accounted for one-third of the Asian green and sustainable bond market, taking a leading position in financing green and sustainable companies and projects.

In 2022, the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited launched Core Climate, a voluntary carbon trading platform. Eligible participants can trade voluntary carbon credits on this platform to neutralise or compensate for their carbon emissions. Through the ongoing development of this platform, participants can effectively trade high-quality voluntary carbon credits, facilitating capital flow into green projects and fostering a new financial infrastructure for climate finance.

Our objective is to accelerate the development of Hong Kong into an international centre for green technology and finance. To this end, we have established a high-level Green Technology and Finance Development Committee, chaired by the Financial Secretary, to promote the rapid and substantial growth of green technology and green finance. In this year, we will launch a dedicated proof-of-concept subsidy scheme for green fintech, with a view to accelerating the growth and application of green fintech in Hong Kong. This scheme will provide early-stage funding support for the pre-commercialisation of green fintech innovations, thereby fostering the expansion of the industry in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong has long enjoyed a close relationship with the United Arab Emirates in various fields, including finance, commerce, and trade. During the Belt and Road Summit hosted in September of last year, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Economy and Tourism of Dubai. This MOU aims to foster financial collaboration between Hong Kong and the Emirate of Dubai, signifying a closer bond for us in the fields of family office, fintech, virtual assets, and green finance, while also enhancing knowledge exchange between the two markets. We will continue to explore opportunities for financial co-operation between Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates under the Belt and Road strategy, making further contributions to both of our markets.

Looking ahead, we eagerly anticipate collaborating with our friends from the United Arab Emirates. I firmly believe through enhanced financial co-operation and closer economic and trade ties, we can build a stronger relationship and create more mutually beneficial opportunities for the United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to the United Arab Emirates for your support and participation in the Asian Financial Forum, which will be held tomorrow. Once again, I extend my sincere appreciation for the invitation to this dinner, and I wish you all an enjoyable evening and a prosperous 2024. Thank you.

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# Speech by Acting CS at reception to celebrate 76th Anniversary of the Independence Day of Republic of the Union of Myanmar (English only)

Following is the speech by the Acting Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing, at a reception to celebrate the 76th Anniversary of the Independence Day of Republic of the Union of Myanmar today (January 23):

Consul General Han (Consul General of Myanmar to Hong Kong-SAR, Mr Han Win Naing), Deputy Commissioner Pan (Deputy Commissioner, 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 Pan Yundong), ladies and gentlemen, good evening,

I am very delighted to be here tonight, with you, in celebration of the 76th anniversary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar's independence.

I am also pleased to add that it is also the 74th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Myanmar and China.

As the Consul General noted, just a few minutes ago, this is Myanmar's first Independence Day celebration in Hong Kong in three years. That, ladies and gentlemen, is a welcome confirmation that we are now well into the post-pandemic economy – and that business is back and presents more opportunities for both our economies.

Hong Kong and Myanmar, of course, have long cooperated in trade, business and cultural exchange.

It helps, and greatly, that Myanmar is a member of ASEAN, our second-largest trading partner. And with the Hong Kong-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement in full effect since 2021, I am confident that trade ties and prospects between our two economies will only grow.

In 2022, bilateral trade between Hong Kong and Myanmar totalled some US\$300 million. In terms of investment, Hong Kong is among your nation's top investors in real estate, electricity and the garment business. Indeed, as the Consul General himself noted, Hong Kong is Myanmar's fourth-largest foreign investor.

Being a longstanding supporter of free and open trade, Hong Kong is committed to expanding regional economic integration and cooperation.

We share the vision of regional prosperity behind the establishment of RCEP – the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Our early accession to RCEP can only boost growth in trade and relations in general between Hong

Kong and Myanmar. Of that, I am confident.

I note with respect that Mr Min Thu, Myanmar's Deputy Union Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, spoke at the Eco Asia Conference here just three months ago.

I am grateful as well that the Consul General attended the eighth Belt and Road Summit, last September, here in Hong Kong. Needless to say, I welcome more Myanmar participation at this year's Belt and Road Summit.

Myanmar is not only among the Belt and Road's many economies, it is also a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Today's Belt and Road, now into its second decade, has become a force for global economic growth, giving rise to wide-ranging projects and prospects. I look forward to working closely with the businesses, and the people, of Myanmar to realise the promise of the Belt and Road for us all.

Beyond business, there is boundless potential in pursuing arts and cultural exchanges between our two economies, our two peoples.

And a fine example of these exchanges is our Belt and Road Scholarship programme which welcomes Myanmar students to pursue full-time, publicly funded university studies here in Hong Kong. This school year, the programme supported 10 students from Myanmar. In the years to come, I hope to see more Myanmar students taking advantage of Hong Kong's world-class, post-secondary education.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me now in a toast: to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the 76th anniversary of its independence. Cheers!

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## **Firm and robust response by CS on human rights situation of HKSAR at UNHRC Universal Periodic Review Working Group meeting (with photo)**

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, attended the meeting of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva, Switzerland, today (January 23, Geneva time). The Working Group examined China's fourth report, which includes a part concerning the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), submitted under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism of the UNHRC.

Mr Chan, as Deputy Head of China's delegation, attended the meeting together with officials of the HKSAR Government as members of China's delegation. In addition to making opening remarks, he actively responded to comments and suggestions about the HKSAR's human rights situation from meeting participants, and sternly refuted the unfounded and untrue remarks from a small number of countries.

The HKSAR Government will continue to fully co-operate with the motherland in the Universal Periodic Review of the UNHRC. It will also continue to tell the international community good stories of the HKSAR's human rights situation in a reasoned and robust manner.

Following is the response made by Mr Chan at the meeting today:

Mr President,

Various comments and concerns on Hong Kong were raised today. However, some of these clearly come from misconceptions and a lack of understanding about our real situation. I am pleased to explain.

No country will watch with folded arms in the face of acts and activities that endanger national security. For those who doubted the need for the Hong Kong National Security Law, let me bring you back to the darkest times of Hong Kong in 2019. Violent and random assaults took place on our streets like never before. Thousands of petrol bombs were thrown; public property was destroyed; traffic was brought to a standstill; and law enforcement officers were viciously attacked. Our community was traumatised. Radical forces blatantly advocated "Hong Kong independence" and sought foreign interference, jeopardising our nation's sovereignty, security and development interests.

The Hong Kong National Security Law was enacted precisely to tackle this situation: to bring back stability, security, as well as the rights and freedoms which people in Hong Kong had been deprived of during such a period of serious violence. Its implementation has played an important role, allowing Hong Kong residents to return to their peaceful and prosperous way of living.

Fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech and of the press, etc, are guaranteed by the Basic Law at the constitutional level. Article 4 of the Hong Kong National Security Law clearly stipulates that human rights shall be respected and protected in safeguarding national security. Any measures or enforcement actions taken under the Hong Kong National Security Law must observe this principle.

Many rights and freedoms are not absolute, and the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) clearly states that they can be restricted by law where necessary to ensure national security or public order, or to protect the rights and freedoms of others. As a matter of fact, Hong Kong fully complies with all applicable provisions of the ICCPR and other relevant international covenants.

Law enforcement actions are taken strictly in accordance with the law, including the protection of fundamental rights. Such actions are entirely based on available evidence and applicable law, and have nothing to do with a person's background, occupation or political stance.

I wish to make it clear that it is inappropriate to comment on, or interfere with, the ongoing legal proceedings which were mentioned today. Judges decide national security cases independently in accordance with the law. The suggestion that certain individuals or groups should be immune from legal consequences for their illegal acts is no different from advocating a special pass to break the law. This totally runs contrary to the spirit of the rule of law.

It is the legitimate right and duty of every state to safeguard its national security, and to do so by enacting laws is in line with international practice. In fact, it is our constitutional responsibility to enact local legislation to safeguard national security. The provisions of the Basic Law, including those on the protection of human rights, will be fully observed when we take forward the legislative exercise.

Mr President, the HKSAR Government is firmly committed as ever to the protection of human rights and always seeks to make improvements suited to Hong Kong's realities. We have expanded support for women, children, the elderly, the disadvantaged, the ethnic minorities, our imported workers, etc; and we have emerged from challenges with even greater strengths. With the strong support from our country, we will continue to better harness our unique institutional strengths in a new chapter from stability to prosperity. Thank you.



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## [CHP investigates confirmed Mpox case](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) said today (January 23) that it is investigating a confirmed Mpox (also known

as Monkeypox) case, and urged the public to heighten vigilance and avoid close physical contact with persons suspected of contracting Mpox. Meanwhile, high-risk target groups are advised to receive Mpox vaccination.

The case involves a 37-year-old male patient. He had developed skin rash since January 11, and visited the Wan Chai Male Social Hygiene Clinic of the DH on January 19. He is in stable condition and arrangements have been made for him to be admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital.

An initial investigation revealed that the patient had visited Portugal and the United States during the incubation period. According to the patient, he had high-risk exposure during his stay at the two places. No epidemiological linkages between this case and other confirmed cases recorded in Hong Kong earlier have been found so far. The CHP is continuing its epidemiological investigations of the case and will report the case to the World Health Organization.

A total of 56 confirmed Mpox cases have been recorded in Hong Kong so far. The CHP appeals again to high-risk target groups to receive Mpox vaccination with a view to lowering the risk of infection or the possibility of having more severe symptoms after infection. Persons who experience Mpox symptoms (including rashes, fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes, exhaustion, muscle pain, and severe headaches) or suspect themselves of being infected are advised to seek medical attention and receive treatment at once, and they should not engage in activities with others during which other people may have contact with their skin rash or body fluids. Members of the public should maintain good personal and hand hygiene to prevent virus transmission or infection through contact. They should also avoid close physical contact with persons or animals suspected of infection.

The CHP had earlier set up an Mpox telephone hotline (2125 2373). The hotline operates from Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) from 9am to 5pm, which enables those who suspect or are concerned they have had high-risk contact with confirmed patients, in particular men who have sex with men or those who have sexual practices with strangers, to make enquiries and receive relevant health advice.

The DH provides vaccination service for high-risk groups of MPox. The following high-risk target groups can receive Mpox vaccination on a voluntary basis:

1. Individuals with high-risk sexual practices, e.g. having multiple sexual partners, sex workers, or having a history of sexually transmitted infection within the past 12 months;
2. Healthcare workers responsible for caring of patients with confirmed Mpox;
3. Laboratory personnel working with zoonotic pox viruses; and
4. Animal care personnel with high risk of exposure in case of Mpox occurrence in animals in Hong Kong.

High-risk target groups can receive Mpox walk-in vaccinations at all of

the DH's Social Hygiene Service Clinics (Sochs) (namely Chai Wan Sochs, Wan Chai Male Sochs, Wan Chai Female Sochs, Yau Ma Tei Male Sochs, Yau Ma Tei Female Sochs, Yung Fung Shee Sochs, Fanling Sochs and Tuen Mun Sochs). Further information of the clinics including their locations is available at [www.dh.gov.hk/english/tele/tele\\_chc/tele\\_chc\\_shcf.html](http://www.dh.gov.hk/english/tele/tele_chc/tele_chc_shcf.html) and [www.dh.gov.hk/english/tele/tele\\_chc/tele\\_chc\\_shcm.html](http://www.dh.gov.hk/english/tele/tele_chc/tele_chc_shcm.html).

Meanwhile, the DH's Kowloon Bay Integrated Treatment Centre and Yau Ma Tei Integrated Treatment Centre, and the Hospital Authority's Special Medical Clinics at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital will also provide Mpox vaccination services for their clients.

For more details, please visit the CHP's page on [Mpox](#).

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## [Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan](#)

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on January 22 to noon today (January 23), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 102 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan" ([www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme\\_rafs/programme\\_rafs\\_fc\\_01\\_30\\_Nuclear\\_Event\\_and\\_Food\\_Safety.html](http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html)).



In parallel, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website ([www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological\\_testing/Radiological\\_Test.html](http://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html)).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website ([www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html](http://www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html)).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 26 632 samples of food imported from Japan (including 17 767 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 7 568 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.