

Speech by DSJ at UNHRC meeting (with photo)

The Deputy Secretary for Justice, Mr Cheung Kwok-kwan, today (March 20, Geneva time) attended the 55th regular session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, and delivered a speech on the Basic Law Article 23 legislation.

Joining him for the meeting were representatives of the Department of Justice, the Security Bureau, and the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government officials attended the meeting as members of China's delegation.

Following is the speech by Mr Cheung at the meeting today:

Mr President,

â€‹Legislation on Article 23 of the Basic Law has just been passed by Hong Kong's legislature, to discharge Hong Kong's long overdue constitutional duty to enact laws on its own to safeguard national security.

First and foremost, each and every sovereign state has an inherent right to enact laws to safeguard its national security, including China. Many countries have enacted a host of national security laws based on their own national security risks and needs. The United States has at least 21 pieces of legislation; the United Kingdom has at least 14 pieces; Canada has at least 9 pieces; and Singapore has at least 6 pieces.

The Basic Law Article 23 legislation will better protect our country from genuine threats to national security in the increasingly intricate geopolitics of our time. The legislation fully aligns with the principles of international laws and practices. The comments by some countries and organisations on this are made in complete disregard of basic jurisprudence and facts, and demonstrate nothing more than double standards and sophistry.

Second, the legislation clearly specifies that the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Basic Law, as well as the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights as applied to Hong Kong, are to be protected in accordance with the law. This important principle forms a cornerstone of the legislation, and is literally written in the new law.

Our new legislation also strictly adheres to the principles of rule of law. The laws are certain and clear, and they come with appropriate exceptions and defences. There is no question that the general public will inadvertently violate the law.

Last but not least, the legislative exercise has gained very wide support from the Hong Kong community.

Mr President, any attempt to discredit or undermine the legislation on Article 23 is misguided at best. We are confident that the legislation will bring about a stable and prosperous future for Hong Kong with the rights and freedoms enjoyed in accordance with the law fully protected, as always. Thank you.



HKSAR Government strongly opposes and condemns slanders and smears on Safeguarding National Security Ordinance

â€‹The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (March 20) firmly opposed and strongly condemned the slanders and smears, as well as grossly misleading and false remarks made continuously by the United States (US) and some Western countries, anti-China organisations, anti-China politicians, foreign media and wanted persons having absconded overseas, after the unanimous passage of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance by the Legislative Council (LegCo) on March 19. Not only are those remarks totally unfounded and fact-twisting, but they also entirely disregard the constitutional duty and practical needs of the HKSAR to legislate, and the positive effects brought by the enactment of the legislation on economic development and protection of human rights.

A spokesman for the HKSAR Government said, "It is the constitutional duty of the HKSAR to safeguard national security. In accordance with international law and international practice based on the Charter of the United Nations, safeguarding national security is an inherent right of all sovereign states. Many common law jurisdictions, including such Western countries as the US, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, as well as Singapore, have enacted multiple pieces of legislation to safeguard national security. Turning a blind eye to the fact and making

exaggerated remarks, the anti-China forces maliciously smeared the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, demonstrating typical political hegemony and hypocrisy with double standards.

"This legislation is indeed the aspiration of the people. After the unanimous passage of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance by the LegCo, members of the public and various sectors of the community including the commercial sector and major chambers of commerce, the legal sector (including the Law Society of Hong Kong), real estate association, the youth sector, other professional sectors and political parties, voiced support for the HKSAR Government's legislative work through different channels such as issuing public statements. All those raising opposing comments were external forces, as the legislation will increase their cost of and difficulty in endangering our national security. During the public consultation period, the Government received over 13 000 submissions of opinions, of which 98.6 per cent showed support and gave positive comments, indicating that the legislation of Article 23 of the Basic Law has strong popular support.

"We must point out that the entire legislative process at the LegCo was conducted entirely in accordance with the due procedures, with diligent and prudent scrutiny by lawmakers. The Bills Committee, together with the subcommittee earlier set up by the House Committee to study matters relating to Basic Law Article 23 legislation, convened 25 meetings in total, and devoted nearly 50 hours to scrutinise every clause of the Bill in detail (representing 30 per cent longer than that of the lengthiest scrutiny by the Bills committee in 2023), raising nearly 1 000 questions and comments, resulting in 91 amendments, most of which were originated from comments by lawmakers. Some clauses were even deliberated for more than an hour, reflecting a thorough discussion at the LegCo in which every member was meticulous and completed the scrutiny with high quality and efficiency.

"As a matter of fact, to effectively prevent, suppress and punish illegal acts endangering national security is precisely to better safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals and ensure the property and investments in the HKSAR are protected by law. Protecting human rights and respecting the principle of the rule of law are principles of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance and have been included in the provisions. Article 2 of the Ordinance clearly stipulates that human rights are to be respected and protected, the rights and freedoms, including the freedoms of speech, of the press and of publication, the freedoms of association, of assembly, of procession and of demonstration, guaranteed by the Basic Law as well as the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as applied to the HKSAR, are to be protected in accordance with the law. For acts and activities endangering national security, there must be adherence to active prevention in accordance with the principle of the rule of law, and suppression and punishment in accordance with the law.

"The above safeguards and respect to human rights could be manifested in several areas as below: the legal provisions including definitions, criminal elements, applicable persons and scopes are clear, targeting acts

and activities endangering national security with clarity so that members of the public will not unwittingly violate the law; appropriate exemptions and defences are provided; penalty and criminal liability are proportional; offences do not have retrospective effect; independent exercise of judicial power by the courts, free from any interference, is guaranteed. The Safeguarding National Security Ordinance has given due consideration to protecting the normal commercial activities and the need to engage in international exchanges of the financial, media and various types of organisations in Hong Kong. The HKSAR Government has repeatedly emphasised on different occasions that these normal commercial activities and international exchanges will not be affected. However, the US and Western countries, anti-China organisations (including Hong Kong Watch and Amnesty International), anti-China politicians (including Chris Patten), media, and wanted persons having absconded overseas continued to smear, deliberately disregarded the facts and slandered the Ordinance, fully exposing their hypocrisy and arrogance, as well as their malicious intentions to harm Hong Kong.

"The Safeguarding National Security Ordinance enables Hong Kong to effectively prevent, suppress and punish acts and activities endangering national security including espionage activities, conspiracies and traps set up by foreign intelligence agencies, and infiltration and sabotage by hostile forces. The return to Hong Kong of 'black-clad violence' and 'colour revolution', as well as 'Hong Kong independence' and violent destruction can also be avoided. We no longer need to worry about threats of 'mutual destruction' in Hong Kong by saboteurs and their acts of damaging public facilities, throwing petrol bombs, setting fires, assaulting citizens with different opinions, pushing Hong Kong into an abyss, and destroying various infrastructure in the city. From now on, the people of Hong Kong will no longer experience these harms and sorrows.

"Following the successful enactment of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, the shortcomings in the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for the HKSAR to safeguard national security are addressed. We must once again emphasise that the ordinance is a piece of legislation to defend against external forces that endanger our national security, acting like a sturdier door and a more effective door lock to defend our home. Only invaders who want to intrude into our home to plunder and loot will not want Hong Kong to legislate to safeguard the country. The HKSAR Government strongly urges these Western countries, anti-China organisations, anti-China politicians, media and wanted persons absconding overseas, all with ulterior motives, to stop smearing and interfering in Hong Kong affairs which are internal affairs of China. Their despicable manoeuvre with politics is doomed to fail."

Security Bureau strongly disapproves of and firmly rejects slanders on Safeguarding National Security Ordinance by UK Foreign Secretary

The Security Bureau today (March 20) strongly disapproved of and firmly rejected the untruthful and biased remarks made by the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom (UK), Mr David Cameron, about the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance which was passed unanimously by the Legislative Council (LegCo) yesterday (March 19).

The Secretary for Security, Mr Tang Ping-keung, said, "Mr Cameron once again made untruthful and unreasonable remarks about the Ordinance. They are sheer political smears and despicable political manoeuvres. As a matter of fact, during the public consultation of the Basic Law Article 23 legislation, 98.6 per cent of the submissions of opinions showed support and gave positive comments, reflecting a strong consensus in society for the legislation, and it is also the aspiration of the people. Furthermore, the relevant Bills Committee convened 25 meetings and used nearly 50 hours to scrutinise the Ordinance (representing 30 per cent longer than that of the lengthiest scrutiny by the bills committees in 2023), during which nearly 1 000 questions and comments were raised by the members, resulting in 91 amendments, with most of them being originated from comments by lawmakers. Some clauses were even deliberated for over an hour, reflecting that the Ordinance was thoroughly discussed at the LegCo and the scrutiny was completed in a conscientious and prudent manner. It was not 'rushed through the legislative process' as claimed groundlessly by Mr Cameron.

"The definition of offences in the Ordinance is clearer than those in the National Security Act 2023 of the UK. For example, the Ordinance clearly stipulates the seven categories of 'state secrets'. The relevant information will constitute a 'state secret' only if the condition that 'disclosure of the information without lawful authority would likely endanger national security' is met. On the contrary, the 'protected information' in relevant UK laws does not concern any specific fields. As long as the improper disclosure of information will likely prejudice the national security or interests of the UK, such information may likely be regarded as 'state secrets'. Disregarding the ambiguity in the laws of his own country, Mr Cameron made unreasonable criticisms against the Ordinance, showing his hypocrisy and double standards. His disregard for facts and gross interference in the matters of Hong Kong were seen very clearly by the general public. The people of Hong Kong will not be deceived.

"The Ordinance only targets an extremely small minority of people who endanger national security, with the aim to protect the lives, property, freedoms and rights of the people of Hong Kong. The Ordinance also stipulates that the rights and freedoms which HKSAR residents enjoy under the Basic Law,

and the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as applied to HKSAR shall be protected in accordance with the law. Following the enactment of the legislation, the rights and freedoms enjoyed by members of the public will be better protected.

"As a matter of fact, after the Ordinance was passed by the LegCo unanimously, members of the public and various sectors of the community including the commercial sector and major chambers of commerce, the legal sector (including the Law Society of Hong Kong), real estate association, the youth sector, other professional sectors and political parties welcomed and voiced support for the legislation. All those raising opposing comments were external forces, as the legislation will increase their cost of and difficulty in endangering our national security. The Ordinance is a piece of legislation to defend against external forces that endanger our national security, acting like a sturdier door and a more effective door lock to defend our home. Only invaders who want to intrude into our home to plunder and loot will object to Hong Kong's legislation to safeguard the country. It is incumbent on us to tear off the mask of these external forces so that the public can see their true colours.

"The core essence of the Sino-British Joint Declaration is about China's resumption of the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong. It did not authorise the UK to interfere in Hong Kong's affairs after its return to the motherland. The UK has no sovereignty, jurisdiction or right of supervision over Hong Kong after its return to the motherland. The UK should immediately stop interfering in Hong Kong affairs which are internal affairs of China," Mr Tang reiterated.

Temporary closure of Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum

â€‹The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (March 20) that the Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum (7 Castle Road, Mid-Levels, Central) will be closed temporarily from May 1, 2024 for upgrading the permanent exhibition galleries to enhance the design and presentation, as well as for maintenance and renovation works. It is expected to re-open in the second quarter of 2025.

Members of the public are urged to grasp the opportunity to visit the "Hong Kong in Dr Sun Yat-sen's Time" permanent exhibition (till April 30) and the "Learning through play: Old textbooks, toys and games" special exhibition (till March 31) at the Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum.

â€‹For enquiries, please call 2367 6373.

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected cannabis buds worth about \\$4 million at airport \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (March 19) detected a drug trafficking case involving baggage concealment at Hong Kong International Airport. About 20 kilograms of suspected cannabis buds with an estimated market value of about \$4 million were seized.

A 24-year-old male passenger arrived in Hong Kong from Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday. During Customs clearance, Customs officers found 40 bags of suspected cannabis buds, with a total weight of about 20kg, inside his check-in suitcases. The male passenger was subsequently arrested.

The arrested man has been charged with one count of trafficking in a dangerous drug. The case will be brought up at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (March 21).

Following the resumption of normal travel and exchanges with the Mainland and other parts of the world, the number of visitors to Hong Kong has also been increasing steadily. Customs will continue to apply a risk assessment approach and focus on selecting passengers from high-risk regions for clearance to combat transnational drug trafficking activities.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).

