

CS attends UNHRC Universal Periodic Review Working Group meetings and calls on international and local organisations in Switzerland (with photos)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, concluded his visit to Switzerland today (January 26, Geneva time). In addition to attending meetings of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), he has called on representatives of several international and local organisations these days to foster mutual understanding and keep them abreast of the latest developments of Hong Kong.

Mr Chan, as Deputy Head of China's delegation, attended meetings of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group of the UNHRC on January 23 and today (Geneva time) with regard to China's fourth report, which includes a part concerning the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), submitted under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism. 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, during the review.

The review report on China adopted by the Working Group will be presented to the plenary session of the UNHRC in due course. Mr Chan said that the HKSAR Government will continue to steadfastly join the motherland in the work under the review mechanism, and tell the international community good stories of the HKSAR's human rights situation in a reasoned and robust manner.

Yesterday (January 25, Geneva time), Mr Chan visited the International Social Security Association to meet with the Secretary General, Mr Marcelo Abi-Ramia Caetano. They exchanged views on establishing a sustainable social security system, tackling challenges brought about by an ageing population, etc.

Mr Chan pointed out that apart from steadfastly enhancing the prevailing non-contributory social security system to provide suitable cash assistance for people with different needs, the HKSAR Government has recently been implementing the strategy of targeted poverty alleviation to further direct resources to the grassroots groups most in need and help them improve their living quality.

Afterwards, Mr Chan visited the International Labour Organization to meet with the Director-General, Mr Gilbert F Houngbo. Mr Chan briefed him on the latest social situation and labour market of Hong Kong.

Mr Chan said that the HKSAR Government is committed to safeguarding workers' rights and benefits and promoting harmonious employer-employee relations. He stressed that imported workers enjoy the same protection as local workers under Hong Kong's labour laws do. The HKSAR Government has introduced various measures to improve workers' rights and benefits in recent years, including progressively increasing the number of statutory holidays, extending the statutory maternity leave, and abolishing the "offsetting" arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund System.

Then, Mr Chan visited the World Health Organization (WHO) to meet with the Assistant Director-General, External Relations and Governance, Dr Catharina Boehme. They shared that the HKSAR Government and the WHO have been fostering exchanges and co-operation on public health-related issues, which include combating the COVID-19 epidemic.

He said that the HKSAR Government is determined to maintain high-quality medical care services and an efficient healthcare system in Hong Kong. It will continue to steadfastly build a "Healthy Hong Kong" by spearheading primary healthcare development, enhancing public healthcare services, and turning the city into a health and medical innovation hub, with a view to catering for the mounting service demand of society.

On January 24 (Geneva time), Mr Chan visited the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) and briefed the Director of IMD World Competitiveness Center, Professor Arturo Bris, on the latest situation of Hong Kong, highlighting its resumption of full normality following the epidemic. That includes the HKSAR Government's introduction of new policy initiatives of attracting enterprises and talent from around the world to Hong Kong proactively to enhance the city's international competitiveness.

The IMD publishes the World Competitiveness Yearbook (WCY) every year. In the latest WCY published last year, Hong Kong continued to be one of the most competitive economies in the world. Mr Chan said that the HKSAR Government will continue to give full play to the unique advantages of Hong Kong under "one country, two systems", which include a solid foundation of the rule of law, a favourable business environment, an efficient and clean government, and a simple and low tax system. At the same time, it will continue to resolutely safeguard national security while developing the city's economy and improving people's livelihood.

On January 23 (Geneva time), Mr Chan met with the Vice President of the Swiss-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Romandie Chapter, Mr Vincent Subilia, and other members of the Chamber to learn about the Chamber's work on promoting exchanges and co-operation in business and trade between Switzerland and China. Mr Chan also introduced to them the latest social and economic developments of Hong Kong, as well as the HKSAR Government's new initiatives to attract enterprises, investment and talent to the city and develop a mega-event economy. He welcomed the Swiss business sector to leverage Hong Kong's unique advantages and professional services to further tap into the Mainland market.

Mr Chan will leave Geneva, Switzerland, today (Geneva time) and arrive

in Hong Kong on January 27 (Hong Kong time).



