

HKSAR Government responds to statement by US Consulate General HK & Macau

In response to a statement issued today (August 7) by the US Consulate General Hong Kong and Macau, which incorrectly and inappropriately commented that the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (National Security Law) would affect the freedom of speech of Hong Kong residents, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) strongly deplored and opposed the statement.

A Government spokesman said: "Safeguarding national security through legislation is in line with international practice. Every country has laws and a duty to safeguard its national security and sovereignty.

"The National Security Law only targets four types of acts and activities that endanger national security. The vast majority of Hong Kong residents who are law-abiding, including overseas investors, are entirely not affected.

"The US has at least 20 such laws safeguarding national security and sovereignty, including the National Security Act, Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA Patriot) Act, Logan Act, Homeland Security Act, Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, Foreign Agents Registration Act, Foreign Missions Act, Alien Registration Act and Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act, etc.

"The US's inappropriate comments on the National Security Law smacks of political manipulation and double standards. It is a gross interference in China's internal affairs and a grave violation of basic norms governing international relations. The HKSAR Government strongly opposes the comments."

The Government spokesman pointed out that the National Security Law was enacted to ensure the resolute, full and faithful implementation of "One Country, Two Systems", "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" and a high degree of autonomy. The capitalist system, high degree of autonomy and legal system of the HKSAR will not be affected. The executive, legislative, independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication, will also remain unaffected.

"The National Security Law clearly stipulates that the HKSAR shall protect the rights and freedoms enjoyed by residents under the Basic Law (BL) 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 Hong Kong in accordance with the law," the spokesman said.

"The National Security Law does not affect the legitimate rights of Hong

Kong residents to exercise freedom of speech, including criticising government policies or policies and decisions made by officials. Neither will freedom of information, academic freedom, policy studies, personal data privacy and general business activities be compromised."

The spokesman stressed: "As a highly international city, Hong Kong has frequent exchanges and close liaison with other countries, regions and relevant international organisations. Such normal exchanges are protected by the BL and the laws of the HKSAR.

"What the National Security Law regulates is the use of Hong Kong by foreign countries or external elements to carry out activities of secession, subversion, infiltration and sabotage, which is obviously different from normal exchange activities. Given that the National Security Law has provided a clear definition of the offence of collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security, the general public will not breach the law inadvertently, and the legitimate rights and freedoms enjoyed by the residents will also not be affected.

"Nevertheless, we will seriously handle, in accordance with the law, such illegal acts where collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security are genuinely involved."