

Remarks by DSJ at 61st session of United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva
(English only) (with photo)

The Deputy Secretary for Justice, Dr Cheung Kwok-kwan, today (March 18, Geneva time) finished attending the 61st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.

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

Following are the remarks by Dr Cheung at the session.

Agenda item 4 general debate on human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Mr President,

The implementation of the National Security Law has successfully safeguarded national sovereignty and security, and ensured long-term stability and prosperity of Hong Kong, China.

It is every sovereign state's inherent right to enact national security laws. China is no exception. For example, the United Kingdom has at least 14 pieces of national security legislation, including the sweeping National Security Act of 2023. It is hypocritical of any country to demand another country to repeal its own national security law and leave it defenseless.

Jimmy Lai's case was mentioned yesterday. I am obliged to point out that he was defended by a team of lawyers of his own choice and received a fair trial for his offences endangering national security. The court's verdict and sentence were published with detailed reasons, for which he chose not to appeal. Lai has received appropriate treatment in custody and never made any complaint. Any suggestion that certain individuals should be immune from legal consequences for their illegal acts totally runs contrary to the spirit of the rule of law.

All in all, we oppose the biased allegations concerning Hong Kong's situation, which have ignored the objective facts demonstrating our remarkable achievements.

Mr President, let me share with you some figures. Last year, Hong Kong was ranked the world's freest economy, No.1 in global IPO (initial public offering) market rankings, and No.1 as Asia's largest hedge fund hub and cross-boundary wealth management centre.

The common law system of Hong Kong is internationally renowned. Hong Kong was ranked the second-most preferred seat of arbitration worldwide last year. The Judiciary exercises judicial power independently, fairly, impartially and openly. Judgments of the Court of Final Appeal were cited as persuasive authorities in overseas common law jurisdictions on close to 50 occasions in the past six years.

These are testaments to the trust and confidence that businesses and people have in the freedom, stability and the rule of law of Hong Kong.

We will continue to safeguard national security and protect legitimate rights and interests of all individuals. Thank you, Mr President.

Agenda item 5 general debate on human rights bodies and mechanism

Mr Vice-President,

China, including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, is committed to engaging in constructive dialogue and co-operation on human rights issues within the UN framework on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

The human rights of Hong Kong residents are constitutionally guaranteed and protected under the National Security Law. The provisions of the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) as applied to Hong Kong are incorporated in local law.

Human rights protection is further underpinned by the rule of law and the Judiciary which acts impartially and independently.

Since the enactment of the National Security Law over five years ago, prosecutions for national security offences constituted less than 0.2 per cent of all criminal proceedings.

We note that the representative of the Netherlands mentioned Chow Hang-tung's case. We urge member states to respect the rule of law and refrain from interfering with on-going legal proceedings in Hong Kong's court.

We are firmly committed as ever to the protection of human rights and always seek to make improvements based on actual circumstances. Thank you.

Ends/Wednesday, March 18, 2026