


# **OVERVIEW OF THE MACAO SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION IN 2023**



In 2023, the Macao SAR Government diligently carried out the strategic plans set out in the Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, as well as in the important series of speeches and guiding spirit of President Xi Jinping, fully implementing the principles of “One country, two systems”, “Macao people governing Macao” and a high degree of autonomy. These helped pull all walks of life in society together, to seize the opportunities arising from post-pandemic revival. The Government introduced a series of measures conducive to economic revitalisation and expansion of visitor sources, leading to faster revival of the economy and resumption of vigour in society. Also, the Government implemented the “1+4” appropriate economic diversification strategy and formulated the first comprehensive and systematic industrial development plan for Macao – the Development Plan for Appropriate Economic Diversification of the Macao Special Administrative Region (2024-2028).

The revisions to the Law on Safeguarding National Security have been completed and have come into effect; the Amendment to the Chief Executive Election Law was officially announced and came into effect on January 1, 2024; there is good progress with work on amending the Legislative Assembly Election Law; and the overall national security concept and the principle of “patriots governing Macao” have been further implemented. The Government has continuously improved people’s livelihoods, and steadily expedited construction of urban infrastructure. The construction of the fourth Macao-Taipa cross-harbour bridge is now in its final stage. The Islands District Medical Complex has launched its trial run. Also, the extension of the LRT Taipa Line to Barra Station has opened.

Public administration reform has been implemented, and the development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin saw new results. The Regulations for the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, the Thirty Financial Measures, and the “catalogue of encouraged industries” were launched in succession. The Overall Development Plan for the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin (2022 – 2035) was approved by the State Council; the Macao New Neighbourhood was completed and opened for subscription; the Government has deepened external exchanges and cooperation, and our functions as a platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries have been reinforced. Overall, the Macao SAR Government has seen signs of rapid post-pandemic economic recovery, peace and stability of society, and good momentum spanning comprehensive areas.

## Ongoing Recovery and Appropriate Diversification of the Economy



In 2023, the Macao SAR Government diligently seized the opportunities for a post-pandemic revival, and rolled out a series of measures to boost the economy and expand visitor sources. There was a significant surge in numbers of inbound visitors, and all major economic indicators showed stable growth. During the year, the local gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 80.5 percent in real terms, reaching over 80 percent of local GDP in 2019. Macao's per capita GDP totalled 559,000 patacas, representing 80.5 percent year-on-year growth. Rejuvenation and vigour were evident in society.

Additionally, the Macao SAR Government, in accordance with the 14th Five-Year Plan and the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, formulated the first comprehensive and systematic industrial development plan for Macao – the Development Plan for Appropriate Economic Diversification of the Macao Special Administrative Region (2024-2028), as directed by the second Five-Year Plan of the MSAR, setting out the objectives, major tasks and focal projects for industrial development in the coming five years. Confidence in economic development among all walks of life in Macao continued increasing.

### **Economic revival fully boosted, with community tourism gaining momentum**

In 2023, Macao emerged from the doldrums, and gradually entered a new age of revival. However, some industries and SMEs did not recover from the hard times caused by the three-year pandemic, leading to an imbalance between economic recovery and development. The MSAR Government remained committed to boosting economic recovery, including through implementing multiple

measures to promote the recovery of the integrated tourism and leisure industry and expand both domestic and foreign visitor sources.

Several temporary subsidies and tax incentives that had been introduced in 2022 were continued. Also, the Government continued expanding investment in public construction works, and launched public infrastructure and public housing projects of various sizes. As of October 2023, there were 51 completed and in-progress construction projects with a budget of over 100 million patacas each.

The recovery of the integrated tourism and leisure industry focused on enriching community tourism and revitalising the community economy. The Strolling through Almeida Ribeiro – Pedestrian Area Pilot Project was launched and, in collaboration with the non-gaming projects guaranteed by the gaming concessionaires, the Government planned to revitalise six historical and cultural areas, and implemented a pilot revitalisation plan for the Rua da Felicidade pedestrian zone, to attract business operators and improve the area’s business environment. The Government also interlinked various major events in the city, to divert visitor flows and enhance the vibrancy of the local cultural and tourism economy.

The Government continued strengthening the brand image of “Arraial na Ervanarios”; organised festivals and events to enhance Macao’s tourism appeal; and fully utilised various unique local resources – such as culture, history, branded events, gastronomy and waterfront areas – to organise distinctive community activities that boost consumption by locals and tourists.

The Government collaborated with renowned online video platforms and television networks from various countries and regions, to produce variety shows that highlight the charm of Macao’s communities, thus strengthening community promotion through online and offline channels. Accredited shops with local characteristics employed new online media for marketing and established a presence in renowned daily shopping platforms in mainland China, constantly incorporating innovative elements to inject vitality into the community economy.

Through a series of measures, the tourism industry recovered satisfactorily, with 28.21 million inbound visitors recorded during the year, 3.9 times the level of the previous year, representing 70 percent of the number of inbound visitors in 2019, and Macao ranking top among tourist destinations for mainland China travellers. The number of overnight visitors was 4.7 times higher than in the previous year, and average guestroom occupation rates increased by 43.1 percent to 81.5 percent year on year, testifying to Macao’s attractiveness as a world tourism and leisure centre, as well as full tourist confidence in visiting Macao. Retail sales increased by 49.5 percent to 86.25 billion patacas during the year, representing an 11.7 percent increase over 2019. Commodity prices were broadly stable.

As the economy gradually recovered, the employment situation continued to improve. The overall unemployment rate during 2023 dropped to 2.7 percent, and the unemployment rate of local citizens was 3.4 percent, representing decreases of 1.0 percentage points and 1.4 percentage points, respectively, year on year. The underemployment rate dropped to 1.7 percent, 5.2 percentage points less than the figure of 6.9 percent in 2022. In line with the changes in demand for human resources in Macao, the Labour Affairs Bureau continued to foster job matching. Through various online and offline matching services, the bureau successfully helped local citizens to find a job in 13,835 cases, 2.2 times the total of 6,288 cases during 2022.

## Strong momentum in building connections between tourism and leisure businesses and key Industries

In 2023, the Government diligently implemented the “1+4” appropriate economic diversification strategy in a pragmatic manner, striving to optimise and strengthen the integrated tourism and leisure industry, while promoting the development of key industries including traditional Chinese medicine and Big Health, modern financial services, high technology, exhibitions and conventions, commerce and trade, and culture and sports.



As regards the development of the integrated tourism and leisure industry, the Government actively enhanced the synergies between tourism and gastronomy, study tours, sports, technology, culture and creativity, conventions and exhibitions, and Big Health through cross-industry integration. It also launched external tourism promotion activities, to expand international visitor sources; promoted the orderly and healthy development of the gaming industry, and monitored gaming concessionaires to ensure they were fulfilling their contractual obligations to expedite implementation of various investment plans.

The Government accelerated the development of the traditional Chinese medicine and Big Health industries. By promoting traditional Chinese medicine research and transformation of research results into viable products and services, research platforms for traditional Chinese medicine have attracted collaboration from mainland China enterprises, to conduct research in Macao, and transform the research results to practical applications. The traditional Chinese medicines registration system has been effectively implemented, to establish a pharmaceutical evaluation and approval system with Macao characteristics, so that Macao’s traditional Chinese medicines for external use and requiring simplified registration qualifications, can successfully obtain drug registration

certificates in mainland China. The measure that allows drugs and medical devices registered for use in Hong Kong and Macao public hospitals to be used throughout the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area has facilitated the use of several drugs that are sold in Macao within the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. The Government has optimised consultation services for applications for industrial licences, to establish Macao-branded traditional Chinese medicines. Several pharmaceutical and Big Health food factories have obtained industrial licences. Management of imports of small medical devices is being smoothly implemented. Major Big Health projects in the Traditional Chinese Medicine Science and Technology Industrial Park of Cooperation Between Guangdong and Macao (GMTCM Park) have been implemented, with 212 registered enterprises – including 70 Macao enterprises – as at the end of 2023.

The Government promoted the development of modern financial services. Efforts have been made to expedite fostering the bond market, and facilitate alignment of the local bond market to international standards. As at the end of October 2023, the value of outstanding bonds issued or listed in Macao reached 525.2 billion patacas. The Government has revised various financial laws, regulations and related guidelines. In 2023, the two major basic laws regulating Macao's currency and financial system – the Macao Monetary Issuance Regime and the Macao Financial System Act, were revised and came into effect, further optimising Macao's financial and legal environment. The Government also introduced over 15 new or revised guidelines and regulatory requirements, covering electronic banking, bonds, financial technology innovations, private funds, property mortgage and insurance financing, with a view to fostering the healthy development of the related industries. The Government has also explored new financial business models, which could allow new financial institutions that provide financing services for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to establish operations in Macao. Several financial institutions that obtained licences in 2022 have commenced operations. Wealth management businesses have developed.

The Government optimised financial infrastructure in accordance with high market efficiency. A variety of financial infrastructure has been built and optimised. In 2023, the Faster Payment System (FPS) - Second Phase was launched, significantly boosting the Easy Transfer local interbank money transfer service. The Monetary Bills and Notes Trading System (MTS) was implemented, to serve as a safe and convenient exchange platform for monetary bill businesses; and the infrastructure of a finance data centre was completed, in order to ensure the safe and reliable operations of various financial infrastructure systems. Moreover, the Government actively promoted the application of financial technologies, and continuously optimised electronic payment services.

The Government accelerated the cultivation of high technology industries. The successful launch of Macao Science Satellite-1 highlighted Macao's remarkable achievements in deepening science and technology cooperation with mainland China. The Government strived to attract technology enterprises to establish their bases in Macao, followed up regarding more than ten technology industry investment projects, supported the practical application of promising projects that have been transformed from research achievements; established an enterprise research and development funding system; launched the Technology Enterprises Certification Programme; and organised visits to Macao and the Greater Bay Area for delegations from innovative technology companies in Portuguese-speaking countries, to attract innovative foreign technology companies to establish their bases in Macao.

The Government promoted steady development of the exhibition and trade industry. In 2023, the international reputation and competitiveness of Macao’s exhibition industry continued increasing, as hosting several significant large-scale international exhibitions elevated Macao’s status as an international exhibition and convention city – resulting in Macao being selected as the Best Convention City (Asia). The effectiveness of trade promotion through organising conventions and exhibitions has been rising. During the year, 1,139 exhibition and convention activities were held, 1.4 times the total in the previous year, with numbers of participants/visitors increasing by 12.7 percent to 1,602,000; these two indicators were at 74.2 percent and 79.6 percent, respectively, of the levels in 2019. Driven by conventions and exhibitions, revenue from non-gaming industries amounted to about 6.2 billion patacas, around three times the level in 2022, reaching a revenue scale similar to that in 2019.

Moreover, in 2023 the “MICE<sup>2</sup> Macao x Hengqin” brand logo was jointly launched by economic and trade departments of Macao and Hengqin. A total of 14 MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions) events in Macao were held in “multiple venue” format. This new format helps to foster the synergies between Macao and Hengqin, expand the scope for development of the industry, and promote cooperation among multiple industries in the region.



The Government maintained strong momentum in culture and sports development. The diverse range of sports and art performances held in integrated resorts has attracted visitors from around the world. Long-term branded performances infused with local characteristics have been

introduced, creating branded arts and culture festivals and events. The Government also promoted the development of Macao’s film and television industry; and organised high-standard large-scale sports events, to foster the integrated development of Macao’s sports industry and related industries.

The Government strived to improve the business environment. Notably, the Government promoted legislative work that supports the development of key industries; enhanced e-government services for the business sector, and digitalisation of public services including property and business registration and notary services; intensified solicitation of investments, receiving 292 new investment plans in the first ten months of 2023, 213 of which were fully followed up in the same period – leading to 805 employment positions, with investment totalling 1.299 billion patacas, exceeding the total in 2022.

Among the investment plans that were completely followed up, over 40 percent belonged to the “1+4” industries. The Government supported the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries; enhanced the brand image and visibility of “Made in Macao” by integrating online and offline approaches; and facilitated the quality-driven transformation of industries under the CEPA policy.

## Forging Ahead with the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin for Integration with National Development





Integrating into overall national development gives rise to significant opportunities for the Macao SAR to realise appropriate economic diversification and sustainable development. On 10 December 2023, the State Council approved the Overall Development Plan for the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin (2022-2035). On 22 December, the Overall Development Plan of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin (“the Overall Hengqin Plan”) was published, setting out the blueprint and guiding principles for the development of the Cooperation Zone for the next 10 years to 15 years.

Based on the Master Plan for the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, the Overall Hengqin Plan sets forth specified development goals for three stages, ending in 2024, 2029, and 2035. It proposes a series of policy measures aiming to foster new industries, build new homes, construct smart cities and establish a new open system, thereby enriching Macao and the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and expanding the horizons and creating new opportunities for the development of Macao’s enterprises and people’s livelihoods and employment.

During the two years since its establishment, the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin has made new achievements, buoyed by strong support from the Central People’s Government and new cooperation mechanisms and systems, with the main focus on promoting appropriate economic diversification and an emphasis on industrial diversification. The four nascent industries have made initial achievements, with continuous integration of Macao elements. By the end of 2023, there were 16,385 enterprises in these four industries, representing a 10.2 percent year-on-year increase. The total operating income of the four nascent industries was 19.689 billion patacas, representing a year-on-year increase of 24.6 percent. A total of 75,371 people were employed by these four industries, representing a year-on-year increase of 13.6 percent. Categorised by industry type, the numbers of registered individuals in three of the four nascent industries – information transmission, software and information technology services; cultural, sports, and entertainment industries; and scientific research and technical services – showed significant increases of 45.3 percent, 27.9 percent, and 25.1 percent, respectively.

Following the implementation of the “Double 15 percent” tax incentives for businesses and individuals in 2022, with the full support and cooperation of various ministries and commissions of the Central People’s Government and the People’s Government of Guangdong Province, the “Regulations for the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin of Guangdong Province” were announced on 8 February 2023. The regulations cover aspects including the governance system, planning, industrial development, facilitation of Macao residents’ livelihood and employment, Macao-Hengqin integration and legal protection of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, providing strong legal support and institutional protection for the development of the cooperation zone.

On 23 February, the People’s Bank of China, together with the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, and the People’s Government of Guangdong Province issued the Opinions on Financial Support for the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin (referred to as the Thirty Financial Measures). The document recommends measures and policies including financial activities for the benefit of society; investments and financing

relating to cross-boundary trade; and the interlinking of financial infrastructure. These measures and policies enhance existing financial collaboration between the two sides, create opportunities for innovative development of the financial sector, and contribute to the development of financial markets in both Guangdong and Macao.

On 11 April, the Interim Measures for the List-Based Administration of High-End and Urgently-Needed Talents Eligible for Preferential Individual Income Tax Policies in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin were announced, specifying the important measure of capping the personal income tax of both domestic and foreign high-end urgently-needed talents working in the cooperation zone at 15 percent. This marks the full implementation of preferential policies for business income tax and personal income tax, i.e. the “Double 15 percent” tax incentive policy in Hengqin. To establish a diverse dispute resolution mechanism, the Hengqin-Macao International Legal Services Cluster has been officially inaugurated, with nine public legal service institutions providing one-stop legal services for enterprises and residents in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

Regarding enhancing inter-connection of infrastructure, some of the permanent passenger and cargo vehicle lanes of the phase-2 construction of Hengqin Checkpoint have been opened for trial operations, along with implementing an innovative clearance mechanism of “joint inspections for one-stop crossing”, thus further facilitating customs clearance.

To support entrepreneurship and innovation by young people, 717 Hong Kong and Macao projects were incubated by five innovation and entrepreneurship bases for young people in Hong Kong and Macao in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone. The number of employees of enterprises established by Macao’s young entrepreneurs exceeded 1,123. Efforts have been made to introduce 24 cooperative investment and financing institutions to various parks. On 3 January 2024, the “Measures for Promoting Macao Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin” were officially published, specifying the criteria and procedures for establishing innovation and entrepreneurship bases for Macao young people in the cooperation zone, the support provided to the operating entities of these bases, as well as the rental reduction and entrepreneurial incentives for Macao’s young entrepreneurs’ enterprises.

On 1 August 2023, the Regulations on the Administration of Medical Professionals from the Macao SAR Practising in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and the Regulations on the Administration of Record-Filing for Pharmacy Technicians from the Macao SAR Practising in Drug Retail Units in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin were promulgated, ensuring medical professionals and pharmacy technicians from Macao can conveniently practise in the Cooperation Zone.

Boosted by the impetus of a series of significant policies, the development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin has gained further momentum. In 2023, the regional gross domestic product (GDP) of the Cooperation Zone reached 47.253 billion patacas, reflecting 2.3 percent year-on-year growth, with a 0.2 percentage point increase compared to the previous three quarters. By the end of December 2023, there were 55,544 business entities in the cooperation zone, representing a 1.6 percent increase compared to the previous year. Among them, there were 5,952 Macao-funded enterprises, representing a year-on-year increase of 11.8 percent, and with 62 enterprises added since the end of November. By the end of 2023, 11,524 Macao citizens were

employed and residing in the cooperation zone, 70.4 percent more than the previous year. They included 5,290 employed individuals, reflecting a remarkable 298.6 percent surge since the previous year. The number of Hong Kong and Macao professionals – such as doctors, architects, and tourism practitioners – engaged in cross-border practice had risen to 1,315 individuals.

On 28 November 2023, the Macao New Neighbourhood project in Hengqin officially opened its residential units for subscriptions. The project encompasses supporting facilities for education, healthcare and elderly care, providing educational services, general outpatient care and social services for local Macao residents. There are six cross-boundary bus routes for commuters travelling between the project and Macao. By the end of the year, over a thousand subscriptions for the Macao New Neighbourhood project were recorded. On 2 January 2024, the Macao New Neighbourhood held a launch ceremony for the one-stop service of online real estate registration procedures and apartment handovers, becoming the first livelihood project in the Cooperation Zone to instantly issue ownership certificates after the handover of completed homes. The entire home purchase process took only about six weeks, from submitting applications to obtaining real estate ownership certificates.

## Actively integrating into overall national development

In 2023, the MSAR Government continued implementing the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, proceeded with the 2023 Arrangements of Key Projects for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and followed up regarding the implementation of the Outline Development Plan for Modern Industries in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (2021-2035).

Regarding the continuous optimisation of policy measures to boost convenience for Macao residents working and living in the Greater Bay Area, the “Northbound Travel by Macao Vehicles” policy was implemented on 1 January 2023, and has since undergone continuous improvements. By the end of the year, the total of monitored entries and exits by Macao motor vehicles with single licence plates exceeded 1.1 million. The implementation of mutual recognition of mainland China and Macao driving licences, the signing of the Arrangements on Quotas of Guangdong-Macao Cross-Boundary Buses and Taxis, and the pilot implementation of issuing multi-entry Hong Kong and Macao travel permits to talented people travelling between Hong Kong and Macao have further facilitated cross-boundary mobility for residents of mainland China and Macao.

The Government continued to deepen cooperation with the Pan-Pearl River Delta Region (PPRD) and support exchanges and cooperation between PPRD provinces and regions and Portuguese-speaking countries. The Government enhanced cooperation in areas such as technology and innovation, finance, Chinese medicine, tourism, culture and sports, exhibitions, and trade between Hong Kong and Macao; promoted cooperation in major areas based on existing mechanisms for joint conferences, such as Guangdong-Macao, Shanghai-Macao, and Fujian-Macao conferences; implemented cooperative task force mechanisms with mainland China provinces, regions and cities such as Hainan Province, Chongqing Municipality, Shenzhen Municipality and Foshan Municipality; signed a rural revitalisation cooperation framework agreement with Jiangxi province, and pragmatically supported rural revitalisation in Jiangxi.

A series of events were held to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Macao). Seizing this opportunity, the Government enhanced support services for cooperation between Chinese and Portuguese enterprises, to act as a platform for promoting exchanges and cooperation in various areas between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

## Consolidating the National Security Barrier and Passing on Core Patriotic Values



To realise long-term national stability, and long-term prosperity and stability of Macao society, safeguarding national security is a must and a common obligation of all Chinese nationals, including Macao citizens. In 2023, the Macao SAR Government diligently implemented the development strategies presented in the report of the 20th National Congress and the spirit of the series of instructions from President Xi Jinping, comprehensively and accurately upheld the principle of “One country, two systems”; firmly safeguarded the sovereignty, security and development interests of the country; and continuously enhanced the legal system and enforcement mechanism to safeguard national security.

### Completing the revision of the Law on Safeguarding National Security to stabilise the foundation of security

In 2023, the Macao SAR Government completed the revision of the Law on Safeguarding National Security and its supporting laws, providing solid legal protection for safeguarding national security.

On the afternoon of 18 May 2023, the Legislative Assembly plenary meeting passed the second reading of the Amendment to Law No. 2/2009 – Law on Safeguarding National Security, which came into effect on 30 May. Compared with the original Law No. 2/2009, the amended Law on Safeguarding National Security has been repositioned from a stand-alone criminal law to an integral part of the foundation, pillar and core legal framework for safeguarding national security in Macao, and now plays a guiding role through a series of conceptual and principled provisions. In order to effectively respond to changes in the situation of crimes against national security, the amended Law on Safeguarding National Security re-establishes the seven offences against national security and adds specific procedural rules and litigation measures, as well as three precautionary measures, thus responding to the overall security risks and threats in a timely and effective manner, and further improving the system of “One country, two systems”, thereby better coordinating and safeguarding the security and development of the country and Macao, and further clarifying the role and responsibilities of the Macao SAR Government and all sectors of society in safeguarding national security.

In June 2023, the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the Macao SAR held its first plenary meeting of the year, which was attended by the Director, Mr Zheng Xincong, and the Deputy Director, Mr Huang Liuquan, of the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government in the Macao SAR, in their capacities as National Security Adviser and National Security Technical Adviser, respectively.

The chairman of the committee, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, pointed out that under the new security situation in the new era, the Macao SAR needs to take advantage of the implementation of the newly amended Law on Safeguarding National Security to continuously strengthen patriotism among Macao residents based on the solid foundation that has been established; launch in-depth related promotion and education work; better coordinate security and development; and continuously perfect the system of safeguarding national security in Macao, so as to safeguard national security and the long-term stability of Macao.

### **Amending the Electoral Law and implementing the principle of “patriots governing Macao”**

While comprehensively and correctly implementing the amended Law on Safeguarding National Security, the Macao SAR Government continued to improve and perfect the supporting legislation and law enforcement mechanism necessary for safeguarding national security in Macao, and raise the awareness of national security among different sectors of the community and the general public, so as to leverage the strengths of all walks of life to uphold the constitutional order of the Macao SAR as stipulated in the Constitution and the Basic Law, with a view to thoroughly and accurately realising the overall national security concept.

To further implement the principle of “patriots governing Macao” and in accordance with the recommendations of the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Legislative Assembly Election on enhancing the electoral system for the Legislative Assembly, on 15 June the Macao SAR Government launched a public consultation on the amendments to the Chief Executive Election Law and the Legislative Assembly Election Law. During the 45-day consultation period, the Government organised eight consultation sessions, and extensively disseminated information

on the legislative amendments to the community and residents through seminars and radio programmes on social affairs. A total of 571 submissions were received from different sectors through various channels, including letters, in-person submissions, faxes, telephone calls, and other electronic means. Of the 6,112 specific suggestions and proposals, 2,439 were related to the Chief Executive Election Law and 3,673 to the Legislative Assembly Election Law. The Macao SAR Government completed the summary reports on the public consultations on the amendments to the Chief Executive Election Law and the Legislative Assembly Election Law in August and November, respectively.

Based on the collected opinions and suggestions, and after giving due consideration to Macao's actual situation, Law No. 20/2023 – “Amendment to the Chief Executive Election Law” was officially promulgated on 27 December and came into effect on 1 January 2024. Regarding the enhancement of the eligibility requirements for the nominees for the Chief Executive Election and for members of the Chief Executive Election Committee, the Law stipulates that, in order to be eligible for the election to serve as a Chief Executive Election Committee member, a candidate must uphold the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region and swear allegiance to the People's Republic of China; and the nominees for the Chief Executive election and the candidates for the election of members of the Election Committee shall not be members of a foreign parliament or government, and the aforementioned persons shall make a declaration of support and allegiance in good faith and sign and submit the declaration, whereas a person who refuses to sign the declaration is ineligible to stand for the election.

In addition, the law establishes a mechanism to ensure the smooth operation of the eligibility vetting procedure; legalises the criteria for vetting eligibility; lists the vetting criteria; and stipulates the National Security Committee's responsibility for vetting whether the nominees and candidates have upheld or sworn allegiance to the Government, and issuing a binding opinion to the Electoral Affairs Commission of the Chief Executive Election regarding any candidate who fails to meet such requirements. No statement of objection or judicial appeal can be filed against a decision of the Electoral Affairs Commission of the Chief Executive Election that is arrived at through this mechanism.

The law also states that if a nominee or a candidate has been judged in accordance with the law to have failed to uphold the Basic Law or to have no allegiance to the People's Republic of China or the Macao Special Administrative Region in the year in which they stand for the election, or in the five calendar years preceding that year, his or her application will not be accepted. Moreover, the Electoral Affairs Commission of the Chief Executive Election is repositioned as a permanent body, in order to assess whether members of the Chief Executive Election Committee meet the legal requirements during their terms of office, and to make timely decisions regarding disqualifications of Election Committee members.

There was satisfactory progress with the amendment to the Legislative Assembly Election Law. On 10 November, the Executive Council concluded discussions on the bill to amend the Legislative Assembly Election Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region, and submitted it to the Legislative Assembly for deliberation. The details of the bill included the establishment of a mechanism to ensure the smooth operation of the eligibility vetting procedures, reinforcement of measures combating unlawful conduct, and optimisation of the election process.

## **Maintaining cybersecurity with a national security perspective**

As the internal and external security situation has become increasingly complex and severe, telecommunications fraud, professional hackers, and even hacking activities supported by other countries have continued to pose varying degrees of threats to national security, Macao society and every Macao resident. Cybersecurity has come to the fore among issues concerning safeguarding national security.

On 10 October, the Cyber Security Committee held its annual plenary meeting. The committee chairman, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, highlighted the importance of safeguarding cybersecurity for development in the new era, and requested all departments to view the development of cybersecurity from the perspective of safeguarding national security, accurately comprehend the underlying relationship between development and security, and realise a new security pattern to safeguard the new development pattern.

In this regard, the Macao SAR Government has been actively working with different sectors of the community to consolidate the resources and strengths of all parties, in order to safeguard cybersecurity in tandem with overall national security, to ensure the long-term stable operation of society, and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the general public and enterprises.

On 23 November and 24 November, the Cybersecurity Incident Alert and Response Centre held a cybersecurity incident drill, with participation by the Economic and Technological Development Bureau, Environmental Protection Bureau, Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau, Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau and Health Bureau as supervisory entities, together with 37 key infrastructure operators from eight private sectors, to raise key infrastructure operators' awareness of cybersecurity; strengthen their prevention, response and management capabilities in terms of cybersecurity management and technology; and rationalise the mechanisms and workflows for responding to incidents among the cybersecurity centre, supervisory entities, and operators, thereby safeguarding cybersecurity and protecting the normal functioning of society in Macao. On 7 December, the "2023 Cyber Security Forum" was held, and academics and other experts from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macao were invited to deliver talks on various cutting-edge cybersecurity topics, in order to enhance cybersecurity capabilities of key infrastructure operators and continuously enhance Macao's overall security level.

As Macao gradually resumed its full opening to the world after the pandemic, the Cybersecurity Incident Alert and Response Centre joined with related regulatory entities and operators to hold a cybersecurity drill on 30 January, with the aim of raising cybersecurity awareness in the sea, land, and air transportation sectors, and safeguarding against a variety of cybersecurity risks, in a bid to ensure the safe and smooth operation of various transport services during economic recovery.

## **Deepening patriotic education and strengthening national security awareness**

To further the general public's understanding of national security and the important relationship between safeguarding national security and Macao citizens, the Macao SAR Government has continuously cooperated with different sectors of the community to actively foster promotion of and education on national security.



On 15 April 2023, the 8th National Security Education Day was held. To mark this occasion, the National Security Education Exhibition was jointly held by the Macao Special Administrative Region Government and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR for the sixth consecutive year. Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng said in his opening speech that national security was an important factor supporting the harmonious development of Macao society and its multicultural heritage. The Macao SAR Government has also strategically strengthened youth work, and supported young people's better integration into the overall development of the country. The Government has continuously strengthened the patriotic education of young people and enhanced their awareness of national security, to ensure that the splendid traditions of being loyal to our country and to Macao will continue being passed on.

The month-long exhibition received overwhelming support from different sectors of the community. The rich content attracted visits by residents and community organisations, youth organisations, schools, public departments, and public and private organisations, with a total of over 60,138 visitors – setting a new record high tally, and the related website recorded over 1.2 million page views. The exhibition effectively enabled Macao residents to review and understand the connection between the overall national security concept and the security and development of the country and the Macao SAR, as well as the significance of the concept. It enabled visitors, especially the younger generation, to realise that national security is an important prerequisite for the stable development of Macao and the personal well-being of Macao residents, and thus strengthened the national security concept.

In response to the country's new situation and Macao's social development – particularly the new requirements including the practical education on “One country, two systems”, the promotion of the patriotic spirit of Macao SAR citizens, and the proactive safeguarding of the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of the country as stipulated in the Patriotic Education Law promulgated



by the country in October – the Macao SAR Government continued deepening cooperation with the education sector, and the related departments continued reaching out to local schools to launch publicity campaigns on the Constitution, the Basic Law of Macao and the Law on Safeguarding National Security, to help young students understand the role and significance of the Law on Safeguarding National Security, the Constitution and the Basic Law of Macao in safeguarding the long-term prosperity and development of Macao as well as its residents’ peaceful livelihoods.

In April 2023, to mark the 30th anniversary of the promulgation of the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China, the Macao SAR Government, together with community groups, launched a multimedia publicity campaign spanning over nine months, to promote a deeper understanding of the Basic Law and the principle of “One country, two systems” among different sectors of the community.

Regarding curricula and teaching materials, the education department has continued promoting the implementation of patriotic education in tertiary and non-tertiary education institutions; compiled and published supplementary teaching materials on *Constitutional Education* and local teaching materials on subjects such as *Morals and Civic Duty*; and introduced supplementary teaching materials on National Security Education, with a view to actively nurturing and enhancing Macao students’ sense of patriotism, and strengthening the younger generations’ sense of identity and belonging to the country.

## Continuously Improving People’s Livelihoods and Striving to Ensure People’s Wellbeing



In 2023, the Macao SAR Government continued implementing practical and effective measures to actively respond to residents' various livelihood-related demands and continuously improve people's livelihoods and wellbeing.

## **Improving welfare facilities and implementing housing policies**

In 2023, the Macao SAR Government continued to improve social services and social security, on the basis of maintaining the existing welfare measures. Through Order No. 95/2023, Regulations on Disbursement of the Carers Allowance, which was approved by the Secretary for Social Affairs, the Carers Allowance scheme has been officially converted into a regular measure, and took effect on 1 December. Despite this conversion, the purpose of the Carers Allowance policy remains unchanged – aiming to provide special assistance to people in financial difficulties who require long-term, intensive daily care.

The Macao SAR Government continues improving medical and health services. With the aging population and the prevalence of chronic diseases, Macao residents' demand for specialist medical services continues growing. In the past decade, the number of inpatient admissions at the Conde S. Januário Hospital has increased by 50 percent, and the number of outpatient visits has increased by 40 percent. In related developments, the Public Health Specialist Building of the Health Bureau was unveiled on 27 October 2023, and the Islands District Medical Complex – Peking Union College Hospital Macao Medical Centre began trial operations on 20 December. These developments have effectively responded to the needs for social development, and continued improving measures to ensure residents' healthcare.

In accordance with the Healthy Macao initiative, Law No. 6/2023 – Law on Prevention and Control of Alcohol Consumption by Minors came into effect on 5 November. The new law aims to reduce the risks and harm to health caused by minors' consumption of alcoholic beverages. Restrictions were established on the sale, supply, and consumption of alcoholic beverages. Restrictions on advertisements and promotion of alcoholic beverages were formulated, to reduce external incentives for minors to consume alcoholic beverages.

The Government's fundamental housing policy is to provide and ensure basic living conditions for all residents. The Government actively improved various housing schemes based on social, economic, and population development, by providing housing solutions that meet residents' financial capabilities and housing needs, especially for sandwich-class families and the elderly. Sandwich-class housing and housing for the elderly were provided, to better solve Macao's housing problems.

On 6 November 2023, application was opened for the senior housing complex launched by the Government. According to the regulations on apartment use and management, the apartments mainly target senior residents who can take care of themselves at home. In terms of apartment services, the complex provides clubhouses, emergency support, social care, departmental services and more to support senior residents, in order to enrich their daily lives and increase their participation in community activities. Also, the complex will combine relevant social care resources to provide individual support to senior citizens who require them. Applications for the first phase, of 759 accommodation units, received an overwhelming response. On 10 December, the Executive Council

completed its discussions on the draft by-law, Transfer of Ownership of Independent Units for Home-Ownership Scheme Housing and Sandwich Class Housing, and sent it to the Legislative Assembly for deliberation.

The Government steadily implemented the housing ladder policy. The regular mechanism for applying for public housing operated smoothly, and 95 percent of public housing tenants were granted rent waivers. In 2023, during the second round of Home-Ownership Scheme applications under the second Five-Year Development Plan, 5,415 Home-Ownership Scheme housing units were introduced, effectively resolving the longstanding problem of insufficient supply in this scheme.

### **Safeguarding local employment and fostering development of vocational skills**

During the pandemic, the Macao SAR Government launched a subsidised training scheme as a temporary support measure, for assisting local residents affected by the pandemic to improve their vocational skills and enter the job market, while receiving some financial aid. Since being launched in September 2020, the scheme has been optimised three times to increase the number of participants, broaden the eligibility criteria, relax the registration requirements, and speed up the payment of subsidies to persons who qualified as trainees, achieving the goal of benefiting more residents who were affected by the pandemic.



As of November 2023, the scheme had offered more than 1,210 courses, with enrolment by more than 29,000 participants, 25,800 of whom completed the courses. More than 25,000 participants had received subsidies, totalling approximately 149 million patacas. Regarding the employment-oriented subsidised training scheme designed for the unemployed and college graduates: more than 16,500 people had completed the courses, and more than 3,900 people were successfully employed, accounting for about 24 percent of the people who completed the course. The Labour Affairs Bureau assisted participants to enter the job market.

Throughout 2023, the Labour Affairs Bureau assisted a total of 13,835 local residents with successfully finding employment through various online and offline job matching services. Once the pandemic was over, Macao's overall economy and employment environment continued improving, and the subsidised training scheme was concluded at the end of 2023.

Moreover, in order to continue protecting residents' employment rights and interests, Law No. 5/2020 - Law on the Minimum Wage came into effect on 1 November 2020. According to the law, the amount specified for the minimum wage would be initially reviewed two years after the law took effect. The Government completed the review work in 2023, and adjusted the minimum wage amount through Law No. 19/2023 - "Amendment to Law No. 5/2020 – Law on the Minimum Wage" promulgated on 18 December 2023, and raised the minimum wage amounts for employees, as follows:

- Remuneration calculated on a monthly basis: 7,072 patacas per month;
- Remuneration calculated on a weekly basis: 1,632 patacas per week;
- Remuneration calculated on a daily basis: 272 patacas per day;
- Remuneration calculated on an hourly basis, 34 patacas per hour; and
- Remuneration calculated based on production results, with an average of 34 patacas per hour.

The new law came into effect on 1 January 2024.

## **Reserving industry talents to coordinate with adequate economic diversification**

Through policies to cultivate talent, create incentive measures to attract overseas talented people to return to Macao, and reserve talented people, the Government is committed to retaining talented people, supplementing the resources needed for the development of key industries in Macao, and ensuring the stability and sustainable development of Macao's society and economy.

Law No. 7/2023 – Legal System for Importing Talented People took effect on 1 July 2023, with by-law No. 19/2023 – Rules for Implementing the Legal System for Importing Talented People and by-law No. 20/2023 – Manpower Development Committee coming into effect on the same day. From August onwards, the Macao SAR Government announced the details and application procedures of various programmes for importing talented people in accordance with the "1+4" appropriate economic diversification strategy. By attracting outstanding talented people, we can

enhance the levels of innovation and competitiveness and the international reputation of Macao, build industrial platforms, and facilitate industrial development in Macao. By leveraging the skills and experiences of talented people, we aim to establish Macao's talent system to promote adequate economic diversification.

In 2023, the Government continued implementing the incentive scheme for talent cultivation and accreditation, focusing on the needs of industrial development, and promoted talent training. Eligible applicants who had obtained professional certificates – including in foreign language proficiency tests, industry-oriented certification examinations, the Incentive Scheme for Professional Certification in Modern Finance and the Incentive Scheme for Professional Certification in Information Technology – during 2023 received rewards through the incentive scheme.

The Government continued fostering the development of education. In 2023, several universities in Macao improved their rankings in global higher education ratings. Through the Science and Technology Development Fund, the Government provided key support to projects in three major fields: integrated circuits, biomedicine and digital technology. By 2023, the results achieved by six key research and development projects were successfully transformed into practical applications or cooperation projects, implemented by the industrial, academic and research sectors in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. The Science and Technology Development Fund launched an industrial, academic, and research and development matching service, to assist in matching the technological needs of Macao enterprises with scientific research results of academic and research institutions. It also partially subsidised the research and development costs of enterprises that yielded successfully matched projects.

Regarding non-tertiary education: through the integration of public and school resources, the development of vocational and technical education courses to provide the talent required for industrial diversification continued. From deepening Chinese-Portuguese bilingual education to promoting innovative teaching design, the Government aimed to promote students' all-round development and physical and mental health. The results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2021) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2022) were released in 2023, and affirmed Macao's education and student capabilities.

## **Optimising public cultural and sports facilities**

The Macao SAR Government has attached great importance to the physical, mental, cultural and sports development of residents. Regarding optimising facilities: the Lai Chi Vun Shipyard commenced operations in June 2023. Through the restoration and revitalisation of the historical site, a unique cultural landmark has been created, to promote the development of local community and cultural tourism.

Aligning with the “1+4” appropriate economic diversification strategy and actively promoting the establishment of a “Multi-cultural exchange and cooperation base with an emphasis on Chinese culture”, the Government joined hands with six major integrated resort operators, in addition to the Lai Chi Vun Shipyard area, to continue promoting the revitalisation of other historical sites in Macao, aiming to provide residents and tourists with good cultural and recreational experiences during holidays and festivals.



The Black Box Theatre of the Macao Cultural Centre officially opened on 3 July, providing Macao’s artistic youth with an excellent training and performance space, and further promoting the development of youth cultural and performing arts.

The Government strongly supported sports development and enhanced sports facilities, including through the construction of the auxiliary building of the Athletes Training Centre, to further support training and development of athletes. The Macao sports delegation achieved good results in sports events, such as the 2023 East Asian Youth Games, the 19th Asian Games, the Fourth Asian Para Games, and the First National Student (Youth) Games.

## **Deepening the implementation of e-governance for the convenience of the public and businesses**

In 2023, the Government continued deepening the implementation of e-governance for the convenience of the public and businesses, optimised the services and functions of “Macao One Account”, continuously expanded the convenience of the service model, and continuously increased its range of services and functions. The system currently provides 319 e-services and functions, spanning social welfare; employment services; transport and commuting; customs clearance; healthcare; education; culture and recreation; business start-ups, registration and certification; payment for living expenses, and more. There are more than 560,000 registered users, which is close to the entire population of Macao.

Law No. 2/2020 - “E-Government” was revised, to optimise its scope of application, together with the applicability of electronic documents, digital reception procedures, taxation standards for electronic certificates, and electronic notifications, thus promoting the sustainable development of e-government in the Macao SAR.

## Steady Progress with Urban Construction to Jointly Build a Liveable City

During 2023, the Macao SAR Government achieved progress in urban development, to provide residents and tourists with a safe and liveable environment. Regarding urban planning and maritime area management, detailed planning commenced for various districts, including Eastern District-2, Outer Harbour District-1, Outer Harbour District-2, Northern District-1, and Taipa Central District-2. Draft bills on marine zoning based on functions and planning of maritime areas, and the Law on Use of Maritime Areas were submitted to the Central People's Government, seeking advice in accordance with the law. A 50-day public consultation on the draft bills commenced on 29 December 2023, which serves as a key reference for the Government to regulate and manage the 85 square kilometres of waters under Macao's jurisdiction as designated by the Central People's Government.

In recent years, urban development and maritime construction in Macao have led to an increased demand for disposal of dredged materials. With the support of the Central People's Government, the MSAR Government and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment signed a cooperation arrangement for managing the disposal of Macao's dredged materials in the Pearl River Estuary, establishing a cross-regional mechanism for the disposal of Macao's dredged materials, and facilitating the development of Macao's maritime projects.

As part of the MSAR Government's efforts to move ahead with major public works projects, the steel deck construction and installation work for the fourth Macao-Taipa cross-harbour bridge has been completed, bringing the project to the final stage of construction, which is scheduled for completion in the second quarter of 2024. On 16 December 2023, the Public Works Bureau called for submission of names for the fourth Macao-Taipa cross-harbour bridge. In addition, the first phase of the Islands District Medical Complex was completed, and there was satisfactory progress with the construction of road networks and common pipelines in New Urban Zone Area A.



The LRT Barra Station and the main structural work for the Seac Pai Van Line were completed. The extension of the LRT Taipa Line to Barra Station came into operation on 8 December 2023, connecting Taipa and the Macao peninsula through the first cross-harbour section of the LRT. The main structural work of the Hengqin Line was completed in the fourth quarter of 2023.

The expansion of and land reclamation for Macau International Airport have received written approval from the Central People's Government. The Sociedade do Aeroporto Internacional de Macau S.A.R.L. is currently revising the project plan for the airport's exclusive area and land reclamation work. A preliminary survey has commenced. There is good progress with the construction of the two Government office buildings on Lot 12 of the Outer Harbour new reclamation area.

The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Macao Cross-Border Cargo Transfer Terminal and the overpass connecting the University of Macau and the Hengqin Port were completed and put into operation. The superstructure work for the Venceslau de Morais public housing project was completed in the second quarter of 2023, and more than 5,600 social housing units were to be completed in Morais and New Urban Zone Area A.

The Government is striving to build a comprehensive transport network through the construction of the railway, pedestrian and road networks, to develop a safe, green and efficient land transport system providing convenience and accessibility, thereby facilitating urban development and supporting Macao's integration into overall national development.

The walking route network includes multi-dimensional pedestrian facilities at major road sections and junctions, coordinating with existing pedestrian facilities. The lifts at the pedestrian bridge on Avenida do Dr Rodrigo Rodrigues and the diagonal crossing facilities at Avenida do Almirante Lacerda have been put into use. Construction of the pedestrian bridges at Avenida Marginal do Lam Mau and Praca Orquideas has commenced, and construction of the pedestrian bridge at Avenida Marginal Flor de Lotus in Taipa commenced in the fourth quarter of 2023. The plan for Phase 1 of the pedestrian bridge at Avenida Marginal do Patane has been finalised.

Regarding the optimisation of environmental management, energy conservation and carbon reduction, in 2023 the Government launched the Electric Vehicle Promotion Scheme and the second phase of the Subsidy Scheme for Replacements of Old and Dilapidated Motorcycles with New Electric Motorcycles, and expanded the scope of the target beneficiaries, which is expected to help with further phasing out polluting old motorcycles and diesel vehicles, thus expediting the dual carbon goals. By the end of 2023, there were 8,263 electric vehicles in Macao, which reduced the proportion of public buses meeting Euro 4 emissions standard or below to approximately 42 percent. The new energy public buses used by the two bus companies accounted for about 64 percent of the total number of public buses in operation. In addition, effective from 1 January 2023, the Government banned the import of non-degradable, disposable plastic knives, forks and spoons. Construction of the food waste treatment centre commenced in the second half of 2023.

In line with the national dual carbon goal, in December 2023 the Environmental Protection Bureau announced the Long-term Carbon Reduction Strategy of Macao as the blueprint for the region's carbon reduction efforts. This proposes "actively implement carbon reduction measures in various areas in phases" as the general direction of Macao's long-term carbon reduction development, with the overall goal of "reaching peak carbon emissions by 2030, and making it a priority for the electricity and land transport sectors to reach near-zero emissions by 2050."



Regarding the development of reclaimed water reuse, the Government has formulated technical regulations for reclaimed water distribution in the public water supply and residential buildings, and related reclaimed water quality standards. The Government also expedited the application for water use for the eco-island, in accordance with comments from related ministries of the Central People's Government regarding the phased implementation of the ecological island project.

To foster the development of a liveable city, the Government has continued developing open space for the public. In 2023, the Government optimised the open space and children's playgrounds in the Northern District; and in the third quarter of the year commenced the design of enhancements of leisure areas at Istmo de Ferreira do Amaral, Rua Central De Toi San, Rua da Missao de Fatima and Rua de Lei Pou Chon.

In addition, work has begun on planning the construction of a sports park at the original site of Macao (Yat Yuen) Canidrome Club. The sports park will comprise three main buildings together with a standard athletics field, seating areas and various small urban plazas, creating a quality venue for recreation, family, and sports activities in the densely populated North District.

## Legislation Covering National Security and Livelihoods in Response to Development Needs



During the second session of the seventh Legislative Assembly (from 16 October 2022 to 15 October 2023), 34 plenary meetings and 171 committee meetings were held, with 22 laws, one resolution, and three simple-majority resolutions passed during the plenary meetings.

### Fulfilling legislative functions

Regarding safeguarding national security, the Legislative Assembly passed Law No. 8/2023 on

amending Law No. 2/2009 - Law on Safeguarding National Security, to comprehensively prevent and penalise offences against national security.

Regarding public administration, the Legislative Assembly passed:

- Law No. 1/2023 on amending the Macao Public Servants Statutes and Regulations and related regulations, to establish a personnel transfer mechanism in accordance with practical needs;
- Law No. 3/2023 - Archives Law, to clearly define the scope of public and private archives, and improve the supervision mechanism and regulations for storage and use of archives;
- Law No. 11/2023 on amending Law No. 8/2002 - Macao Special Administrative Region Resident Identity Card System, to provide convenience and enhance administrative efficiency by using electronic identification while ensuring the security of residents' identity information; and
- Law No. 16/2023 - Legal System for Corporations with Public Capital, to regulate the establishment, transfer, management and operation of, and investment in, corporations with public capital, while establishing related principles and regulatory modes.

Regarding monetary, finance, tourism and entertainment, the Legislative Assembly passed:

- Law No. 15/2022 - Trust Law, establishing the general system and basic principles for regulating trust relationships on the basis of Macao's legal system, to facilitate the development of the modern financial services industry;
- Law No. 10/2023 - Macao Currency Issuance System, addressing the needs of modern financial services development, to establish digital currency as a legal tender, simplify administrative procedures for currency issuance, define exceptions to mandatory acceptance of cash, and lower the upper limit for accepting coins;
- Law No. 13/2023 - Macao Financial System Act, to enable scope for exploring various types of financial institution licences, enhance the flexibility of banking licences, simplify procedures for public issuance of bonds, establish a temporary licensing system for financial technology projects, and align with international standards to enhance regulatory requirements and combat illegal financial activities; and
- Law No. 16/2022 - Gaming Business Operations Framework, to set business norms for gaming operators, establish a comprehensive mechanism for review gaming operator qualifications, and define the obligations and responsibilities of regulated entities.

Regarding urban development and social welfare, the Legislative Assembly passed:

- Law No. 18/2022 - Legal System Governing Urban Renewal, to protect private property rights and respect the will of property owners by stipulating procedures for initiating the reconstruction of old buildings and the minimum percentage of ownership rights for mandatory participation in reconstruction, and establishing necessary arbitration systems to resolve related disputes;
- Law No. 17/2023 - Legal System of Housing for the Sandwich Class, providing a new pathway for property ownership between Home-Ownership Scheme housing and private housing, to address the housing needs of residents with different income levels;

- Law No. 5/2023 - Public Parking Services System, to enhance the operation, management, utilisation and supervision of, and system of penalties regarding, public parking services;
- Law No. 9/2023 - Arbitration System for Disputes over Water Leakage in Buildings, to introduce a new mechanism for assisting residents with resolving long-standing water leakage issues.

Regarding education and talent systems, the Legislative Assembly passed:

- Law No. 17/2022 - Law on the Activities of Private Complementary Pedagogical Support Centres for Non-higher Education, to improve the licensing and supervision system, particularly regulating the business premises and facility criteria, operating rules, practitioner qualifications and system of penalties;
- Law No. 12/2023 - Specific Provisions on Remuneration for Staff Tasked with Specific Duties of the Education and Youth Development Bureau, to rationalise and clarify the remuneration and working hour system for principals, vice principals and officers-in-charge of non-tertiary education public schools, education activity centres and youth centres operating within the scope of Education and Youth Development Bureau; and
- Law No. 7/2023 - Legal System for Importing Talented People, to stipulate definitions of high-end, outstanding talented people, and senior professionals, and establish their required qualifications and approval mechanisms.

Regarding healthcare and animal welfare, the Legislative Assembly passed:

- Law No. 15/2023 - Legal System for the Islands District Medical Complex – Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital, to define the positioning, objectives and operational management model of the medical centre; grant administrative, financial and property autonomy to align with future healthcare policies and the overall direction of developing medical tourism;
- Law No. 14/2023 - Medically Assisted Reproduction Technology, to address society's demand for medically assisted reproduction technology, regulate and supervise the situations in which the technology can be used, beneficiaries, management of reproduction units, and handling of related personal data; and
- Law No. 4/2023 - Law on Veterinary Clinical Care and Commercial Use of Animals, establishing the regime for professional accreditation of veterinary surgeons, and the regime for licensing and supervising establishments for clinical veterinary care, breeding, sale or boarding of animals, to reinforce animal health protection and enhance the industry's service quality.

Lastly, regarding the protection of workers and minors, the Legislative Assembly passed:

- Law No. 2/2023 - Law on Occupational Safety and Health in the Construction Sector, defining the obligations of all stakeholders, outlining the key components of occupational safety and technical standards regarding health, regulating the establishment and operation of an admission system for safety management personnel, and enhancing the supervision system, to reinforce occupational safety and health protection for workers; and
- Law No. 6/2023 - Law on Prevention and Control of Alcohol Consumption by Minors, imposing restrictions on the sale, provision and consumption of alcoholic beverages, and

monitoring of minors who come into contact with alcoholic beverages, to foster a secure and wholesome environment for development of minors.

All the above 21 laws were proposed by the Government.

## **Fulfilment of supervisory function**

In accordance with the authority conferred by the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region, the Legislative Assembly performed its supervisory duties regarding the government budget and public finances. This involved passing Law No. 19/2022 on the 2023 Government Budget, deliberating the Government's Reports on Budget Implementation for 2021 and the Commissioner of Audit's Report 2021, and listening to and discussing the 2023 Policy Address delivered by the Chief Executive.

Moreover, to enhance interactions between the administrative and legislative functions, the Chief Executive's question and answer sessions were held in April and August. The first session entailed questions to the Chief Executive regarding public administration and issues of general public concern – including administration reform, promotion of employment, tourism development, cultural promotion, optimisation of the transportation system, development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, and the ageing population. The second session focused on appropriate economic diversification, development of the Sino-Portuguese platform, land planning, smart transportation, telemedicine, education policies, culture and sports, public housing, welfare measures and cross-departmental collaboration. Hence, the Legislative Assembly continued demonstrating its functions of communicating public demands and resolving issues concerning people's livelihoods.

To better fulfil its duty of listening to and gathering legislators' opinions, the Government held a briefing for legislators on the detailed planning of Eastern District-2 and LRT East Line, a report on the simulation-based feasibility study of sluices in the Inner Harbour and progress with disaster prevention and reduction, as well as the proposed, revised plan for the Hac Sa Youth Activity Experimental Camp. To enhance mutual interactions and understanding between the administrative and legislative functions, the Government held a special consultation meeting for legislators on amending the Chief Executive Election Law and the Legislative Assembly Election Law, and formulating the Plan for Development of Appropriate Economic Diversification of the Macao Special Administrative Region (2024-2028). Lastly, during the legislative session, legislators visited by invitation the Islands District Medical Complex – Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital, to share views on its future operation.

During the legislative session, legislators gave 376 pre-agenda speeches, covering the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC), safeguarding national security, pandemic prevention and control, consolidation of Macao's image as a tourism city, cultivation of the four nascent industries, promotion of financial innovation, employment protection, social welfare improvement, urban renewal and housing policy. Moreover, legislators submitted 807 written questions and 81 oral questions to the Government, and the Legislative Assembly held eight plenary meetings covering these enquiries.

Lastly, the Follow-up Committee for Land and Public Concession Affairs, the Follow-up Committee for Public Finance Affairs and the Follow-up Committee for Public Administration

Affairs actively followed up regarding administrative issues, and prepared seven reports, on the following topics:

1. Follow up regarding the tender process for public works and the interim report on implementation of the 2022 Government Budget;
2. Implementation of the 2Q22 Investment Plan Budget;
3. Implementation of the 3Q22 Investment Plan Budget;
4. Implementation of the 4Q22 Investment Plan Budget;
5. Implementation of the 1Q23 Investment Plan Budget;
6. Progress with construction of the new prison, and the construction expenses; and
7. Report on promoting new energy vehicles and improvement of the cross-border traffic situation.

Other responsibilities of the Legislative Assembly include listening to and fully reflecting different views, suggestions and criticism from the public, and making prompt responses regarding public aspirations. During the session, legislators received members of the public in-person through a duty roster system seven person-times. The Legislative Assembly also received 226 submissions and recommendations via in-person visits, telephone calls and emails. The Legislative Assembly received one petition from an association, and handled it appropriately.

## Expediting Anti-corruption Progress and Enhancing Quality and Efficiency through Effective Auditing



In 2023, the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) seized the opportunities arising through post-pandemic recovery to strive for excellence in anti-corruption work and step up the pace of anti-corruption efforts.

The CCAC investigated and prosecuted a number of anti-corruption cases. These included the investigation of a case involving an application for residency through fake real estate investment, in which the CCAC discovered that the Assistant Prosecutor General in charge of the case was suspected of providing illegal assistance to a person who was being investigated in a criminal case; solving several cases of security service companies defrauding the Government, with bribery involved; and several cases involving civil servants fabricating attendance records. Under the CCAC's strategy of equal emphasis on combating and preventing corruption, the number of cases involving defrauding government subsidies, which were formerly rampant, decreased significantly in 2023.

In terms of handling complaints to the Ombudsman, the CCAC has achieved significant results by continued monitoring of improvements in administration by the related entities through the reinvestigation mechanism. On the other hand, seizing the opportunities arising through investigations of some complaint cases, the CCAC has continued working with the administrative authorities to explore a proper understanding of various systems and regulations related to the law. In addition, the CCAC actively enhanced the transparency of its work, and encouraged administrative self-confidence, including by promptly announcing the results of investigations of more complaint cases, and affirming lawful and rational practices of the administrative authorities.

In 2023, the CCAC received 1,617 inquiries and 701 complaints, reports, and leads. Among the complaints or reports, 102 were filed for investigation, or merged with cases with similar content and transferred to the Anti-Corruption Bureau for follow-up. A total of 123 cases were referred to the Directorate of Ombudsman Services for follow-up. A total of 387 cases were sent to the Complaint Management Centre because they were not eligible for initiating an investigation, with 214 of these cases archived directly, and 173 referred to the related authorities for follow-up.

Together with the cases carried forward from 2022, the CCAC finished handling a total of 238 investigation files in 2023. The Anti-Corruption Bureau completed 87 cases (71 anti-corruption cases and 16 assistance cases), nine of which were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office, with the remainder being archived. Of the 151 cases completed by the Directorate of Ombudsman Services, 30 have led to improvements in governance and optimisation of work by related departments, and five cases were added to the "retrospective reviews" list for reinvestigation.

In 2022, the CCAC opened 31 joint investigation cases in response to requests from overseas counterparts, 16 of which were closed and 15 of which were still being followed up at the end of the year. The CCAC made ten requests to overseas counterparts, involving mainland China authorities and the Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

As regards publicity and education, the CCAC held 605 activities, seminars, and talks throughout the year, reaching 29,728 participants. In accordance with the policy direction of the state and the MASR Government to emphasise youth development, in 2023 the CCAC focused its anti-corruption education on youth. Making full use of an integrity education base for young people, the CCAC continued to innovate and provide novel and interesting anti-corruption training and teaching activities, to foster the establishment of correct values among young people.

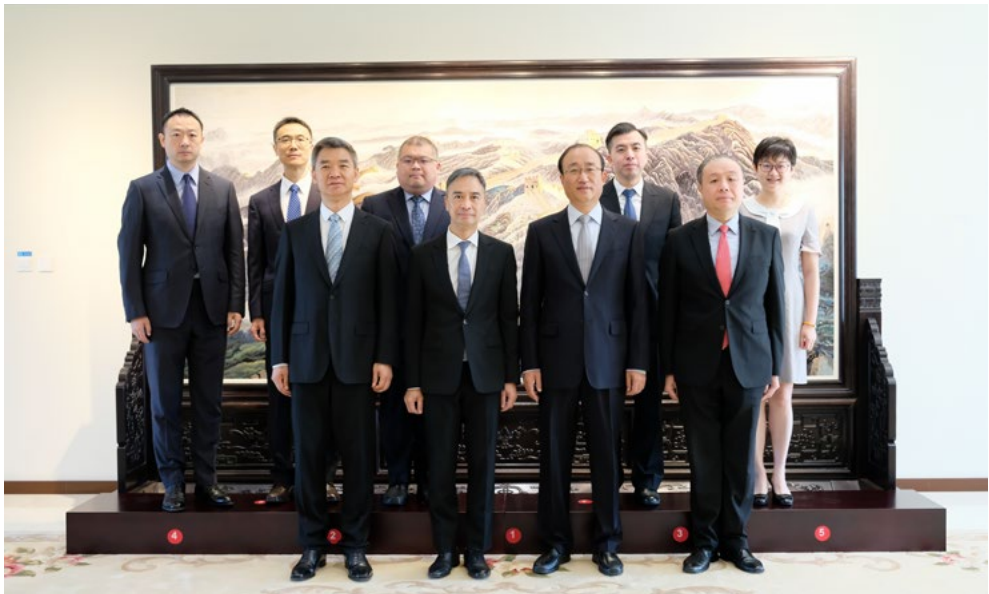
With the resumption of normal passenger travels in Macao in 2023, the CCAC paid visits to the

Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, the National Supervisory Commission, the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the Ministry of Public Security, the Supervisory Commission of various mainland China provinces and cities, as well as the ICAC and Office of the Ombudsman in Hong Kong. The CCAC also received delegations of counterpart organisations from mainland China, Hong Kong, and other countries and regions, further promoting bilateral and regional exchanges and cooperation.

As a member of international or regional organisations, the CCAC has also fulfilled its obligations by actively sending representatives to participate in conferences, seminars and workshops organised by the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA), the Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific (ACI), the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Network), the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and other organisations, to keep abreast of international developments in anti-corruption work. In addition, the CCAC participated in the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation - "Clean Silk Road" Special Forum, organised by the National Supervisory Commission in Beijing.

The CCAC continued supporting the country's participation in the performance review of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. In 2023, the CCAC joined the national delegation to participate in conferences held online and offline in Vienna, Austria, and participated in the 10th Intersessional Meeting of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, held in Atlanta, USA.

In 2024, the CCAC will press ahead with its work on integrity, continue to seek new ideas in preventing and combating corruption, and strive to achieve the objective of developing a corruption-free government, as set out in the Second Five-Year Development Plan and policy guidelines.



In 2023, the Commission of Audit published the Commissioner of Audit's Report 2023, and the following three audit reports:

Construction of a Rainwater Pumping Station and Box-Culvert in Northern Inner Harbour – it was found that the departments involved were poorly coordinated and managed, and communications in cross-departmental cooperation were not ideal, resulting in missed opportunities to optimise and improve the work. After the completion of the project, there was again severe flooding in the area during a rainstorm in the same year, which shows that the project may be unable to meet future long-term needs, and the public funds invested were not optimally utilised.

Subsidies Granted by the Sports Fund for Sports Events – showing that the fund has not established any regulations for the approval and actual implementation of sports event funding, and that most key aspects of the write-off of subsidised items are not regulated. The fund has the responsibility to ensure that public funds are used in an appropriate and reasonable manner, and that resources are used properly. This is a basic principle of public administration and a key element in policy implementation.

Failure of a Cable of the Taipa Line of Light Rail – the report's comprehensive review pointed out that, apart from outsourcing the construction of public works projects in Macao, sometimes third-party organisations or experts are also engaged to provide professional services in design, supervision, and project management. However, the departments themselves are still responsible for establishing reasonable supervision and control measures, to ensure that the outsourced services are properly and effectively implemented.

In addition to auditing, the Commission of Audit conducted the following activities in 2023:

On 22 March, Mr Ho Veng On, Commissioner of Audit, met with Mr Ma Xuebin, Director of Audit of the Audit Office of Guangdong Province, and his delegation. They discussed measures to strengthen communications and deepen cooperation.

From 17 April to 20 April, Mr Neoh Hwai Beng, Director of the Audit Bureau of the Commission of Audit, led a delegation to Shanghai for a seminar on audit work and information sharing with the Shanghai Office of the National Audit Office.

On 9 June, the Commissioner of Audit, Mr Ho Veng On, visited Mr Hou Kai, Auditor-General of the National Audit Office in Beijing. They discussed big data auditing technology, staff training arrangements, and further learning about "research-based auditing". Mr Hou Kai briefly conveyed the spirit of the first meeting of the 20th Central Audit Commission, quoted an important speech by General Secretary Xi Jinping, emphasised the need to do a good job in audit work in the new era and the new journey, and pointed out that the National Audit Office would always support the development of audit work in Macao and provide assistance with capacity building.

The Commission of Audit in Macao aims to help the Government improve its governance level, better integrate into overall national development, and serve the national development strategy. Mr Ho Veng On also pointed out that audit authorities around the world are actively promoting "research-based auditing", and the Commission of Audit would like to encourage its members to learn about cases and key points of related audit projects, in order to broaden their thinking and help improve quality and efficiency, with the hope of further utilising the positive role of the Government's auditing work.



On 18 October, the Commissioner of Audit, Mr Ho Veng On, led a delegation to attend the 40th Innovation and Development Conference of Nanjing Audit University, held in celebration of its 40th anniversary. Mr Ho delivered a lecture at the “Auditing Masters’ Forum” and participated in the university’s “Audit Forum” interview session. He interacted and exchanged ideas with students and faculty members on ways auditing can promote the realisation of good governance in society, and ways government auditing can play a role in “promoting quality economic development, deepening reforms, regulating the operation of power, and combating corruption and promoting integrity”. He also introduced Macao’s audit system, the work of the Commission of Audit, and shared strategies for and experiences in managing audit organisations.

From 8 November to 9 November, the Commissioner of Audit, Mr Ho Veng On, attended the 12th Conference of the Supreme Audit Institutions of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (OISC/CPLP) in Guinea-Bissau. He held discussions with delegates covering the meeting’s theme, “Communication and the values and interests of Supreme Audit Institutions: effective communication and relationships with stakeholders”; and introduced the mechanism for communications between the Commission of Audit in Macao and audited entities, emphasising that good interactions would contribute to the good management of public resources.

From 6 December to 7 December, the Commissioner of Audit, Mr Ho Veng On, attended the 7th Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Audit Forum 2023, which had the theme “Research on the Implementation and Development of Big Data Auditing Empowered by Science and Technology”, and exchanged views with the Director of the Audit Office of Guangdong Province and the Director of Audit of the Audit Commission of Hong Kong on issues such as strengthening exchanges and cooperation between the three places, and contributing to the development of the Greater Bay Area.

In order to help auditors to accurately understand the new positioning and requirements of government auditing work against the background of the latest developments in auditing, experts from the National Audit Office visited Macao from 21 November to 22 November, to give special lectures on topics such as “research-based auditing,” “public investment auditing,” and “government investment fund auditing”.

Regarding deepening the application of computer-assisted auditing, in 2023 related units of the Commission of Audit continued enhancing the application of the “Auditor Office (Macao version)” and “computer-aided tools”. Based on the system’s existing functions, and in response to the needs of audit work, new automated forms and audit methods were added and revised, and data association detection was added. Also, regular online meetings were held with the Computer Technology Centre of the National Audit Office, to exchange views on the operation, maintenance and potential optimisation of the system, and further updated the system after considerable verification, in the hope of achieving greater functionality.

Regarding publicity and promotion, the CA continued organising talks on auditing culture, for cadets of the Academy of Macao Public Security Forces who were attending promotion preparation programmes, and newly recruited public administration workers. At the invitation of public departments, the CA also promoted optimisation of use of public funds to civil servants, along with encouraging enhancements to efficiency of government departments, and striving to deepen the awareness of all department personnel regarding cooperating with audits and cherishing public funds.

## Major Cases Before the Court and Judicial Defence by the Prosecution



### Numbers of cases admitted by the three-tier court system

2023	Court of Final Appeal	Court of Appeal	Court of First Instance (including the Examining Magistracy)	Administrative Court	Total
Cases admitted	114	997	17,139	86	18,336
Cases concluded	137	903	16,656	88	17,784
Cases pending	69	437	12,981	91	13,578

The majority of cases in the three-tier court system were criminal cases and criminal labour cases, which totalled 5,907 (excluding Examining Magistracy cases). Ranking second were civil and labour cases, which totalled 4,041. There were also 304 administrative cases and 8,084 other cases.

## Law promotion and legal consulting services

To strengthen promotion of the law and foster transparency in the judicial system, from 9 October 2013 the courts of the Macao SAR began issuing press releases about typical concluded cases, and publishing them on the websites of the court and the Government Information Bureau. Various media may republish the press releases and report on these cases, which can hopefully promote legal awareness and law abidance in society, while informing the public about the judicial approaches and methods adopted for settling various disputes. As of the end of 2023, an accumulated total of 1,073 articles had been published, 95 of which were published in 2023.

Summary of consulting services provided by the Base Court in 2023:

2023	Criminal Courts	Civil Courts	Small Claims Courts	Total
Total number of inquiries	1,657	4,527	1,506	7,690
Number of cases	1,643	3,998	1,506	7,147
Number of directly handled cases	1,599	3,838	1,506	6,943
Number of cases transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office	44	107	---	151
Number of cases transferred to other departments	0	53	---	53
Number of telephone inquiries	564	1,028	---	1,592

## Legal assistance and enforcement

Regarding the delivery of judicial writs and assistance in investigations and evidence collection in civil and commercial cases, in 2023 the Court of Final Appeal received 298 judicial writs from mainland China courts, and delivered 113 judicial writs to mainland China courts on behalf of courts in Macao.

In 2023, the Court of Appeal received 39 requests for reviewing and endorsing judgments made by mainland China courts or arbiters; three judgments endorsed by the Court of Appeal were sent to the Base Court for enforcement. The Base Court received one request on Arrangements Concerning Reciprocal Recognition and Enforcement of Arbitral Awards between mainland China and the Macao SAR.

The Macao SAR Government and the Hong Kong SAR Government signed the Arrangements Concerning Reciprocal Recognition and Enforcement of Arbitral Awards between the Macao SAR

and the Hong Kong SAR on 7 January 2013; the arrangements came into effect on 16 December 2013. As at the end of 2023, the Court of Appeal had handled five arbitral award cases.

The Macao SAR Government and the Hong Kong SAR Government signed the Arrangements for Mutual Service of Judicial Documents in Civil and Commercial Cases between the Macao SAR and the Hong Kong SAR on 5 December 2017; the arrangements came into effect on 1 August 2020. As at the end of 2023, the Court of Final Appeal had received 46 judicial writs from Hong Kong courts and delivered 67 judicial writs to Hong Kong courts on behalf of courts in Macao.

## **Declarations of assets and interests**

During 2023, when receiving individuals for the declaration of assets and interests, the Court of Final Appeal performed its duty according to Law No.11/2003, which had been amended according to Law No.1/2013. It opened 184 individual dossiers, received 2,134 documents for the declaration of assets and interests that involved 1,785 people, and sorted and updated the contents of the individual dossiers according to the law.

According to stipulations in the aforementioned law, the Office of the Court of Final Appeal has uploaded Part IV of the disclosure documents of assets declarations to the website of the courts of the Macao SAR, ensuring they are available in the public domain as required by law. In 2023, the disclosure documents (Part IV) of 443 individual dossiers involving 335 people were published online. There was an accumulated total of 4,994 disclosure documents, involving 1,010 people.

## **Summary of work in 2023 and outlook for the courts of the MSAR**

During the judicial year, Macao's three-tier court system maintained normal operations. The Court of Final Appeal received the most cases on unified judicial opinions in recent years, and rendered four unified judicial opinions after an expanded panel hearing. Through exercising its important judicial function of providing unified judicial opinions, the Court of Final Appeal has resolved conflicts in administrative enforcement and judicial operations arising from laws becoming outdated or ambiguous legal provisions.

After the end of the pandemic prevention measures, there was a significant increase in the number of criminal cases, especially those arising from gaming-related activities. Minor labour cases increased significantly, mainly due to poor business conditions or business closures caused by the adverse economic conditions or other major incidents during the pandemic. Also during the judicial year, the Court of Appeal and the Court of Final Appeal adjudicated five cases on the interpretation and application of relevant provisions of the Basic Law.

In 2023, apart from performing judicial functions in accordance with the law, the courts of the MSAR also implemented the following:

The electronic service for judicial operations and the dedicated electronic platform for the courts maintained smooth operations. Macao's courts continued enhancing digital information sharing with other public departments, to ensure the electronic processing of work and the use of digital information, thereby further enhancing the efficiency of legal proceedings.

The Base Court adjudicated several major cases of public concern. From January to April 2023, the Criminal Courts of the Base Court passed first instance judgments on a case of criminal activity by the Suncity Group, cases of corruption involving former leaders of the former Lands, Public Works and Transport Bureau and businessmen, and a case of criminal activity by the Tak Chun VIP Club. The judges managed to bring the cases to trial expeditiously and efficiently, while ensuring the litigation rights of the parties involved in the proceedings with strict adherence to laws, openness, and transparency.

The system of localised management of judicial support personnel has been fully implemented. Under the oath of office administered by the Presidents of the three levels of courts, three General Secretaries, three Assistant General Secretaries and 17 Chief Secretaries of the three levels of courts took their oaths of office, in batches. This marked the first regular appointments since the handover of local senior judicial support personnel to leadership and supervisory positions.

The Seventh Seminar of Senior Judges of Cross-Strait and Hong Kong and Macao was held in Macao in late September 2023, with the theme “Justice and Efficiency”. Judicial officers of the four regions across the strait attached great importance to the quality of judicial officers, and aimed to set exceptionally high requirements for judicial officers, who shall possess good legal literacy and conviction regarding the rule of law, spirit of service to the people, impartiality, and nobility of character.



In 2023, the Public Prosecutions Office initiated 13,931 criminal cases, 31.33 percent more than the 10,608 cases in 2022, while the number of cases concluded was 12,476, representing an increase of 11.39 percent from the previous year’s total of 11,200 cases. Among these cases, 3,393 resulted in prosecutions after investigations, and 8,808 were archived, representing increases of 17.28 percent and 9.46 percent, respectively. In addition, the number of cases transferred from

2022 was 5,645, 7.58 percent less than the 6,108 transferred cases in 2022.

Based on the case totals, the five types of crimes with the most investigations in 2023 were:

- 4,221 crimes against property rights, involving theft, vandalism and illegal appropriation of found items (up 44.7 percent year-on-year);
- 2,872 fraud and extortion cases (up 73.43 percent year-on-year);
- 1,389 offences involving physical assault (up 10.24 percent year-on-year);
- 951 illegal immigration or stay-related crimes (down 11.53 percent year-on-year); and
- 899 crimes related to traffic accidents (up 16.75 percent year-on-year).

In addition, the Public Prosecutions Office initiated relatively high numbers of investigations of the following crimes:

- 534 computer crimes (up 76.82 percent year-on-year);
- 317 cases of forgery (up 56.16 percent year-on-year);
- 249 cases of crimes against sexual freedom and sexual self-determination (down 16.72 percent year-on-year);
- 238 crimes against public authority (up 11.21 percent year-on-year); and
- 204 cases of crimes against personal freedom (up 29.11 percent year-on-year).

Regarding civil cases and civil labour cases, the Civil Labour Division of the Public Prosecutions Office handled 894 civil cases, 14.91 percent more than the 778 cases in 2022; and 450 labour cases, 9.22 percent more than the 412 cases in 2022. In addition, the Civil Labour Division initiated 992 pre-litigation cases in accordance with the law, and handled 1,595 pre-litigation cases.

Among the above cases, the cases involving labour litigation procedures exhibited the following characteristics:

- 287 new cases of work accidents or occupational diseases were initiated, 5.59 percent less than the 304 cases in 2022. A total of 303 mediations were conducted for these cases; 12 cases required litigation due to failure to reach a mediation agreement;
- 163 ordinary labour litigation procedures were initiated, significantly more – with a 50.93 percent increase – than the 108 cases in 2022 (165 mediations were conducted, while 14 cases required litigation due to failure to reach a mediation agreement); and
- During 2023, 468 workers were involved in successful mediation procedures conducted by the Public Prosecutions Office, representing an increase of 21.56 percent.

In 2023, the Office of the Administrative Court at the Public Prosecutions Office handled 82 initiated cases in various administrative, tax and customs litigations, of which 49 were judicial appeals, 14 were litigation cases, five were cases involving urgent proceedings, eight were objections to tax enforcement, and six were litigation procedures handled by the Public Prosecutions Office.

In 2023, the overall work of the Public Prosecutions Office before the Court of Final Appeal

and the Court of Appeal was as summarised below:

- Participated in 942 criminal (including traffic and labour misdemeanours), civil (including labour and civil litigation), and administrative proceedings of the Court of Appeal, 3.29 percent more than the 912 cases in 2022; and issued 1,181 opinions on appeals and replies to appeals; and
- Participated in 117 cases of the Court of Final Appeal, 17.02 percent less than the 141 cases in 2022; and issued 87 opinions on appeals and replies to appeals.

In 2022 and 2023, the Public Prosecutions Office before the Court of Final Appeal and the Court of Appeal initiated three and one extraordinary appeals, respectively, on unified judicial opinions to the Court of Final Appeal, in order to facilitate the resolution of conflicting judicial opinions in accordance with the law and ensure the proper understanding and implementation of the law. In 2023, the Court of Final Appeal gave a mandatory judgment on unified judicial opinions regarding legal conflicts in the judgments of each of these four appeal cases.

The work of the Public Prosecutions Office of Macao during 2023 is summarised as follows:

1. The Public Prosecutions Office resolutely fulfilled its constitutional responsibility to safeguard national security, actively participated in and cooperated with the amendment to the Law on Safeguarding National Security, and completed the formulation of internal implementation measures and the new functions entrusted to the Public Prosecutions Office after the amendment, in order to build up a strong judicial defence to safeguard the security of the country and Macao;
2. In response to serious internal corruption cases involving individual judicial officers, the Public Prosecutions Office has imposed severe penalties on offenders in accordance with the law, comprehensively examined internal operations against the strictest standards and blocked loopholes, and perfected the management and supervision of judicial practices, to further strengthen the system for ensuring the integrity of the prosecution team;
3. With the changes in the post-pandemic social landscape and crime patterns, the total number of criminal cases and the crime rate were generally on the rise from 2022, but Macao's overall security environment remained stable;
4. There was a marked increase in the number of fraud cases, computer crimes and gambling-related crimes, while the number of drug-related crimes also rose. These increases were directly related to the full resumption of customs clearance and the rapid recovery of economic activities, as well as criminal activities increasingly involving computers and other technologies. In response, the Public Prosecutions Office will work closely with the security authorities to monitor and curb the proliferation of related criminal activities through appropriate cross-border liaison mechanisms;
5. The number of cases involving offences such as illegal appropriation of found items, evasion of responsibility in traffic accidents, illegal reception of persons connected with illegal entries or illegal stays, and obstruction of public authorities in the performance of their duties exceeded one-fifth of the total number of cases initiated. In view of such offences being associated with weak legal comprehension and little awareness of compliance with the

- law, the Government shall step up efforts in legal education and publicity on legal literacy;
6. The total number of sexual offences against minors decreased from 2022, but the number of cases involving direct offences against minors increased. The Public Prosecutions Office will strengthen interactions with various sectors of the community, and continue to step up its efforts in combating sexual offences against minors, while promoting the formulation of effective measures for protecting minors from sexual abuse;
  7. The number of domestic violence, illegal employment and sham marriages – which are cases of long-term concern to society – continued showing a downward trend, hitting the lowest level since 2021, and the underlying growth of related offences and potential social instability was effectively curbed;
  8. The number of cases initiated for money laundering offences was basically unchanged from the previous year, while the number of cases prosecuted increased. In its practical work, the Public Prosecutions Office has strengthened cooperation with related authorities, and proactively discharged its duties as a member of the interdepartmental task force on combating money laundering and terrorism financing, in order to continue combating money laundering and other financial crimes;
  9. The demand for international and interregional judicial assistance cases has eased after the pandemic, and the number of criminal and civil judicial assistance cases has broadly declined and returned to the pre-pandemic level. The Public Prosecutions Office will expedite the improvement of the legal system for judicial assistance and liaison between internal and external parties, to optimise the mechanism for practical operations in response to the needs of judicial practice;
  10. The Public Prosecutions Office continued to strengthen legal supervision, enhance the protection of public interests, and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of specific disadvantaged groups such as workers and minors in accordance with the law. In addition, the Public Prosecutions Office strengthened communications and cooperation with government administrative departments, to enhance the quality of investigations and more effectively process cases in the public interest;
  11. With the recovery of economic activities, labour disputes involving the protection of labour rights and interests have been on the rise. The Public Prosecutions Office will effectively discharge its statutory duty to protect the legitimate rights and interests of workers;
  12. In response to the shift in Macao's social development, the Public Prosecutions Office actively participated in and advanced the reform of the Macao's legal system, while providing professional advice to Macao's administrative and legislative authorities, to improve the legal system in accordance with the law;
  13. Based on the needs of judicial practice, the Public Prosecutions Office has proposed expediting the negotiations and legislative process regarding the legal system for interregional mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, extension of the detention period for specified serious crimes, and appropriately raising penalties for corruption offences and the length of prosecution period, in order to improve Macao's criminal legal system in



response to the requirements for progress towards a corruption-free society;

14. The Public Prosecutions Office resumed its regular external exchanges, the “National Studies Tour for Macao Prosecutors”, and the training programme for judicial assistants in mainland China, to enhance the prosecution team’s understanding of national studies and their solidarity with the country; and
15. With construction of the information technology infrastructure complete, the case management system for prosecution work has entered a new stage of digital management. The Public Prosecutions Office will focus on the application of big data to enhance the standard of prosecution work by digital means, thereby improving the quality of service for the public.