

Press Release



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CS' statement

Following is a statement by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Donald Tsang, at a press conference on the Third Report of the Constitutional Development Task Force this (May 11) afternoon:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Constitutional Development Task Force has published the Third Report today. The Report signifies that we have entered into a new phase of discussion of concrete proposals.

In accordance with the Basic Law and the NPCSC's decision on April 26, the Third Report sets out the possible scope of amendments to the methods for selecting the Chief Executive (CE) in 2007 and for forming the Legislative Council (LegCo) in 2008. It provides reference materials for our community to formulate views and concrete proposals.

Regarding the method for selecting the CE, the Third Report sets out the possible areas for amendments, including the number of members in the Election Committee (EC), the composition of the EC, the delineation and size of the EC electorate, and the number of EC members required to nominate candidates for the office of the CE. As regards the method of forming LegCo, the possible areas of amendments include the number of seats, the number of seats to be returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, the number of seats to be returned through functional constituencies (FCs), the delineation of the FC electorate, and the rules in respect of allowing those with right of abode in foreign countries to be elected as LegCo members.

Apart from the scope of amendments mentioned in the Third Report, the Task Force welcomes other views and proposals from the community regarding the methods for selecting the CE and for forming the LegCo.

Besides, I would like to call upon all sectors of our community to actively participate in this discussion. I understand that some are disheartened by the fact that universal suffrage would not be introduced for the elections in 2007 and 2008. However, I hope they could overcome these sentiments and make the best use of this opportunity to make progress in our constitutional development.

Following the NPCSC decision that the election methods in 2007 and 2008 can be amended, we need to work collectively with resolve and persistence to determine the amendments to be made. Only through frank discussions and careful consideration could we narrow the gap and eliminate the differences between us. We need to build a consensus within our community before agreement can be reached by the three parties as provided for in the Basic Law.

To facilitate rational and pragmatic discussions on major proposals within our community, the Task Force will organise a series of seminars, which will allow everyone a better understanding on the views and concerns of all other sectors and parties through direct communication. This will provide not only a melting pot for ideas on how to amend the election methods in 2007 and 2008, but also an opportunity for all to see the advantages to exchange views with an open mind in pursuit of a consensus.

In other words, the Task Force is about to collect views from the community widely. This would last for about three months until August 31, 2004, to allow ample time for the public to formulate and submit their proposals. The channels for submission of views and specific proposals have been listed in Chapter Four of the Third Report. Of course, the Task Force would welcome written submissions from any organisation or individual. We would also be glad to arrange meetings with them as necessary.

I hope that different sectors and organisations would put forward to the Task Force proposals that fall within the framework of the Basic Law and the NPCSC decisions. Any effort that goes beyond this framework would be futile. If we are truly committed to improving our political structure, we must forgo that which is impossible and pursue that which is possible. Otherwise, the opportunity to build a consensus would be gone, and the public's wish to improve the election methods in 2007 and 2008 would not be met.

After August 31, 2004, the Task Force would collate all views received during the consultation period. Based on the views collected, we will pull together a series of possible proposals by this fall before we launch further consultation with the public. The Task Force will continue to operate in a highly open and transparent manner. All views received will be publicised as long as there is no objection from the relevant individuals.

I am ready to take questions.

Ends/Tuesday, May 11, 2004

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