



CE speaks on NPCSC's constitutional development decision

Following is the translation of the opening remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr Tung Chee Hwa, at a press conference on the National People's Congress Standing Committee's decision on constitutional issues today (April 26):

Good afternoon. The ninth meeting of the 10th National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) has today made a decision on the issues relating to Hong Kong's constitutional development. According to the decision of the NPCSC, the method of universal suffrage shall not be introduced for the election of the Chief Executive in 2007. As regards the election of the Legislative Council in 2008, universal suffrage shall not be introduced to elect all members of the Legislative Council. The 50/50 ratio for members of the Council elected from functional constituencies and from geographical constituencies shall remain unchanged. The procedures for voting on bills and motions in the Legislative Council also shall remain unchanged. Subject to this premise, specific methods for selecting the Chief Executive in 2007 and forming the Legislative Council in 2008 could be appropriately modified, consistent with the principle of gradual and orderly progress and in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Basic Law.

As Chairman Wu Bangguo said at the meeting, the NPCSC made an important decision today. The NPCSC has fully considered the views of the various concerned parties before making its decision. The rationale behind the NPCSC's decision is to protect the interests of the citizens of Hong Kong, to ensure that Hong Kong's constitutional development proceeds in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law, to develop a healthy democratic system in a gradual and orderly manner and to promote the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. The design and development of the constitutional system of any country or territory must be grounded on its respective actual situation, then develop through a gradual process, as well as through continuous exploration and accumulation of experience. The NPCSC's decision today helps to safeguard Hong Kong community's overall long-term interests as well as maintain Hong Kong's long-term

prosperity and stability.

The HKSAR Government welcomes the NPCSC's decision, which formally initiates the amendment mechanism provided for in the Annexes to the Basic Law.

The Constitutional Development Task Force led by the Chief Secretary for Administration has done a great deal of work over the past three months. It has widely consulted various sectors of the community and the relevant departments of the Central Authorities. It has properly dealt with the issues of principle and legislative process relating to constitutional development. Now it is the right time to take forward our work relating to constitutional development on this solid foundation.

I have already asked the Chief Secretary for Administration, and the Constitutional Development Task Force under his leadership to make every effort to submit the third report of the Task Force in May, and to take forward actively the next stage of work relating to constitutional development in a rational, pragmatic and forward-looking manner. The Chief Secretary for Administration will let you have the details in a moment.

I would like to appeal to all political parties and groups, as well as various sectors of our community to adopt a calm and rational attitude, to uphold the spirit of seeking common ground while putting aside differences, disputes and pre-conceived views, in striving to reach a consensus for our constitutional development with concerted efforts.

Thank you.

Ends/Monday, April 26, 2004

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