



CS' statement

Following is a statement by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Donald Tsang, on constitutional development at a press conference this (April 26) afternoon:

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Chief Executive has just stated the position of the HKSAR Government on the decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC), promulgated today, in respect of HKSAR's constitutional development. The HKSAR Government welcomes the NPCSC's decision to accept the Chief Executive's recommendation, and to determine that there is a need to amend the methods for selecting the Chief Executive in 2007 and for forming the Legislative Council in 2008. The NPCSC has also set out clearly on the scope for amendments. This enables the Task Force to embark on the consultation work for the next stage.

As the Chief Executive said just now, the Task Force will embark on the next stage of work as soon as possible. We will seek to release our Third Report within May.

In the light of the scope for amendments referred to in the NPCSC's decision promulgated today, the Report will set out the areas which may be amended in respect of provisions relating to the methods for selecting the Chief Executive and for forming the Legislative Council, so as to provide reference to various sectors of the community when formulating

specific proposals in the coming months.

In the Third Report, the Task Force will also invite different sectors of the community to put forth their views and suggestions on the provisions relating to the methods for selecting the Chief Executive and for forming the Legislative Council, provided that they are consistent with the provisions of the Basic Law and the NPCSC's decision. Of course, if anyone has already got certain views and suggestions, he is most welcome to forward them to the Task Force any time.

I expect that the Task Force will start to widely collect the views of the community at the same time when its Third Report is released. Detailed arrangements will be set out when the Third Report is published.

I believe that the community now has a golden opportunity to demonstrate our political maturity. I understand that there are a wide range of views on the subject in the community. But I must emphasise that, if we are to make good progress, individuals and organisations of different backgrounds, affiliations and views should come together, commence a dialogue on the basis of mutual respect, so as to better understand one another's concerns and worries, and not to waste time on confrontations, collisions, or arguments which go beyond the NPCSC's decision. Only through rational discussions and consensus building can constitutional development achieve success. We must bear in mind that if any concrete proposals for constitutional development are to materialise, they must have the endorsement of a two-thirds majority of all Members of the Legislative Council and the consent of the Chief Executive, and they shall be reported to the NPCSC for approval or for the record. None of these steps is dispensable.

In conclusion, it is my earnest hope that the

community will face the NPCSC's decision calmly, rationally and with a pragmatic attitude. The views put forward to the Task Force by different sectors of the community and by Members of the Legislative Council in the past few months have been very instrumental to our deliberation on whether the methods for selecting the Chief Executive and for forming the Legislative Council should be amended. In future, the public can continue to participate in initiating and discussing various proposals relating to constitutional development. Hong Kong's constitutional development could be taken forward. I also believe that Hong Kong people are practical-minded and understand that we cannot afford to make any mistakes with our constitutional development. To this end, constitutional development in a prudent, cautious and step by step manner, is preferable to any hasty move which brings about risks to be borne by the community. We need a constitutional system that can stand the test of time, is consistent with the Basic Law, and is conducive to the economic prosperity and the social stability of Hong Kong. It is therefore essential that we proceed cautiously.

Thank you.

Ends/Monday, April 26, 2004

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