

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

United Nations hearings of reports submitted by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region under the international human rights treaties

Introduction

The year 2005-06 is a busy one for human rights reporting. By the end of the financial year, three United Nations (UN) treaty monitoring bodies will have heard reports on our performance under the treaties for which they are responsible. This paper informs the Panel of the timing and arrangements for the hearings.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

2. In April this year, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) heard China's initial report under the Covenant, of which our second report formed a part. A Hong Kong team attended the hearing as members of the Chinese delegation, which was led by China's Permanent Representative to the UN. A team from Macau also attended. The concluding observations were issued on 13 May and a separate paper on the hearing and the Government's initial response to these observations has been submitted to Members.

3. As is the custom, we invited the CESCR to visit Hong Kong before the hearing in order to obtain first-hand experience of the situation here. Accordingly the Chairperson (Professor Virginia Bonoan-Dandan) and the Country Rapporteur (Ms Maria Virginia Bras-Gomes) visited Hong Kong in the working week, 28 February to 4 March. They met the Chief Executive,

key policy secretaries, representatives of political parties, NGOs, and representatives of ethnic communities and sexual minorities.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

4. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, treaty body for the Convention, last heard a report on Hong Kong's performance under the CRC in October 1996. In June 2003, China submitted its third report under the Convention. Our initial report *as the HKSAR* formed part of that report, as did a report on Macau. In 2004, the Committee informed us that the related hearing would take place in May/June 2005 but the date was subsequently postponed to the Committee's 40th session on Monday, 19 September (whole day) and the morning of Tuesday, 20 September this year. A Hong Kong team will attend the hearing as part of the Chinese delegation, together with a team from Macau. The composition of the team is under discussion within the Administration..

5. Again, in accordance with normal practice, we invited the Committee to visit Hong Kong before the hearing. The Chairman Jakob Doek (Netherlands) and Member Ms Lee Yang-hee (South Korea) visited us between 15 and 17 April as part of a visit that included the Mainland and Macau. They were accompanied by China Programme Manager for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt. The visitors met Members of the Panel, the Acting Chief Executive, key Government officials, NGOs, and other stakeholders.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

6. In November 1999, the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), treaty body for the ICCPR, heard the HKSAR's initial report in the light of the Covenant. In January 2005, the Central People's Government submitted our second report in the light of the ICCPR to the HRC secretariat. The hearing is tentatively scheduled for the Committee's 86th session, in March 2006. We will advise the Panel of the precise timing as soon as we are able.

7. We have not yet determined the composition of the delegation, though – as with the other hearings – it will comprise representatives of the most relevant bureaux/departments. We will make an announcement nearer the time of the hearing. We also plan to invite the Committee to Hong Kong and will announce the timing and so forth when arrangements are firm.

Home Affairs Bureau

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