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Green Paper's clear objective: setting models, roadmap and timetable for implementing universal suffrage

Commenting on the remarks made by the Hon Albert Chan in his "Letter to Hong Kong" broadcast on RTHK today (July 15), a Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau spokesman said that the Green Paper on Constitutional Development (the Green Paper) was promulgated with the clear policy objective of setting the models, roadmap and timetable for implementing universal suffrage.

"This delivers one of the key electoral promises made by the Chief Executive (CE) during his election campaign. The fact that the HKSAR Government has issued this public consultation document 11 days after inauguration on July 1 underlines the commitment of the Government to resolve the issue of universal suffrage within the five-year term.

"The pursuit of democracy has been debated in our community for over two decades since partial elections were introduced to the Legislative Council (LegCo). We believe it is time to set the course for Hong Kong for attaining universal suffrage," he said.

The spokesman said that, in the finest tradition of Hong Kong being a free and open society, the Government had invited the public to give their views on the electoral models, roadmap and timetable for attaining universal suffrage.

"To facilitate public discussion, we have categorised the proposals received and presented them in the Green Paper as three types of options for implementing universal suffrage for electing the CE and for forming LegCo respectively.

"We have presented the most crucial elements of the two electoral methods in the Green Paper systematically. These are the critical questions that need to be addressed. Members of the public can discuss and make choices on the different options and timetable for implementing universal suffrage.

"As a matter of fact, the public only need to make choices on the key issues, for example, the number of members of the nominating committee, the number of CE candidates to be put forth for election by universal suffrage, how the functional constituencies can be replaced, and the timetable for implementing universal suffrage," he said.

Regarding the requirement of "nomination by the nominating committee in accordance with democratic procedures" the spokesman said that the Green Paper had already set out all the relevant views received, and that we should deal with the issue in accordance with the Basic Law.

"At this stage, the community can first strive to reach consensus on the number of number of candidates available for election by the public after nominations by the nominating committee. After we have reached consensus on this, detailed

procedures can be discussed further and agreed upon," he said.

He added that the Government expected that universities and independent think-tanks would conduct opinion polls to gauge public support for various electoral models. These polls would provide useful references for the Government.

"We hope that, following the public consultation exercise, differences in opinions will have narrowed adequately for a mainstream view to be formed.

"If so, we can put forth a package of proposals, which, hopefully, stands a good chance of securing two-thirds majority support in LegCo, consent by the CE and endorsement by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress."


The spokesman added that Hong Kong's constitutional arrangements were now entirely different from that in 1988, when the former Hong Kong Government undertook public consultation about introduction of direct elections into the legislature.

"We now have clear constitutional benchmarks, for example, whether we can secure two-thirds majority support in LegCo.

"We call upon political parties and groups, as well as different quarters of our community to keep an open mind and be accommodating. It is only through rational and pragmatic public discourse that we can forge consensus on the future constitutional development of Hong Kong," he said.

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