

Respected Councilors and Honored Guests:

I am honored to have this opportunity to present to you my views on Hong Kong's constitutional development today. I understand that many people have different views on the issue of universal suffrage, but that just shows that we live in a democratic society. As a Hong Konger, I come before you today to exercise my right to freedom of speech, and also to fulfill my duty as a citizen to contribute to the development of our city's future.

With the introduction of the Green Paper on Hong Kong's Constitutional Development, we, the citizens of Hong Kong, have been given the right and power to decide our own, as well as our children's, futures. This marks an important milestone and should serve as a reminder to the high degree of democracy and autonomy that we already enjoy.

I am certain that all of us here share a common goal: to improve the lives of the Hong Kong people and build a better, stronger and more vibrant society. Many people believe that bringing universal suffrage to Hong Kong will immediately solve all of our problems. "The faster, the better," they say. However, I would consider that as unwise. Universal suffrage is a significant responsibility that each and every one of us must take on, and brings many changes to our society. It is not as simple as "everyone gets to vote". We need to prepare our political system and governance structure (such as strengthening checks and balances and separation of powers) as well as to educate our citizens about the responsibilities as voters. We need to reach general consensus among the public through rounds and rounds of public consultations. This takes a tremendous amount of time and effort. Introducing universal suffrage in a mere 5 more years will not be enough time. Educating our citizens about the responsibilities associated with

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voting, and creating a political atmosphere which is conducive to responsible voting takes at least one generation of time (or 10 years). The United States took a 100 years to perfect a democratic structure that is suitable for their society and to fully cultivate a responsible voting culture through generations and generations of education. Time is in our hands. We should not rush into this without first establishing and strengthening the building blocks which makes us a successful democratic society. Therefore, I believe we will need at least one more generation (or around 10 more years) of time before we have a chance to effectively and safely introduce universal suffrage.

But let's not forget, Hong Kong is not a country, but a part of China. We must take into account the central authorities when we design our democratic process. It would be unrealistic, and impractical, to think otherwise. The same situation existed when the British occupied Hong Kong: the British government had the final say on all Hong Kong affairs. But today, we are a special case under China that happens to enjoy a much higher degree of autonomy when compared to any other city, state or province in the world. We have already made a lot of progress on democracy, but we cannot have unrealistic expectations for the future. I think it is fair to all Hong Kong people that the views of our national government be respected and followed. Any changes to our democratic process, as prescribed by the Basic Law, must require the approval of the National People's Congress of our nation.

Lastly, I would like to add, that "any progress is good progress". Everyday we are making important progress, whether big or small, towards our collective goal of one day bringing universal suffrage to Hong Kong. I would also like to say, the chicken can only come out of the egg when it is mature and ready. The same applies to

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universal suffrage. When we as a Hong Kong people are ready, our dreams will be fulfilled.

Thank you, Counselors, for your time.