

## Press Release

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SCA speaks after CSD workshop on universal suffrage for LegCo

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Following is the transcript of a media briefing given by the Secretary for Constitutional Affairs, Mr Stephen Lam, after attending the workshop organised by the Committee on Governance and Political Development of the Commission on Strategic Development (CSD) this afternoon (November 6) (English portion):

Secretary for Constitutional Affairs: Today we had a discussion in the workshop of the CSD regarding universal suffrage for the Legislative Council (LegCo). One of the most basic points which we considered is that under the Basic Law, the political arrangement in Hong Kong requires the executive government and the legislature to exercise mutual checks and balances. This is because the Chief Executive is elected through one route, and the LegCo is returned through another route. The executive and the legislature need to work together to serve the public of Hong Kong.

Today we discussed and considered various models for implementing universal suffrage. We had thorough discussions about the proposed bicameral system. Quite a few members who attended today's meeting expressed reservations.

Firstly, to implement a bicameral legislature will require, at least, amendments to the relevant annex to the Basic Law.

Secondly, under a bicameral system, legislation proposed will need to be passed by two chambers, and this will not necessarily be conducive to the efficiency of public administration in Hong Kong.

Thirdly, if we make such an effort just to achieve a transitional arrangement for returning the LegCo, this might not be worth the efforts.

As to whether we should suspend for the time being further discussions about a potential bicameral system for returning the LegCo, that decision will be made by the CSD at our meeting on November 23.

We also discussed other possible models for implementing universal suffrage. One set of proposals is that we should divide the territory into different constituencies for returning part of our LegCo seats by geographical direct elections, and the other part of the LegCo seats should be returned by a territory-wide "list system". This means that under this arrangement, every voter will have two votes: one for returning a geographical constituency candidate, and one for returning a "list system" candidate under the territory-wide list.

The other model proposed and put forth was that we should, perhaps, retain the geographical constituency direct elections, and as for functional constituencies, we should allow functional constituency bodies to nominate candidates to be

returned by universal suffrage. Under this set of arrangements, it will mean that each voter will have multiple votes: one vote for returning a geographical constituency candidate, and the other vote for returning functional constituencies nominated candidates.

Whether it is “one person, two votes” or “one person, multiple votes”, suggestions were made that maybe we should ensure that some room will be left for independent candidates and others without political party backgrounds to participate in LegCo elections. This is because Hong Kong is a pluralistic society and under our circumstances, it is necessary for those who have no political party backgrounds to be able to seek election in the LegCo elections.

Finally, some members of the CSD suggested that maybe we should phase in implementation of universal suffrage for returning the LegCo over several terms. There were other members who suggested that we should continue to aim for implementation of universal suffrage by 2012 for the LegCo.

Reporter: Are we any closer to reaching a consensus among the members about how to implement universal suffrage in Hong Kong eventually? My second question is, when you speak in Chinese, you mentioned something about it's difficult to convince some members to abolish the functional constituency in one go. Can you tell us more about that?

Secretary for Constitutional Affairs: I think I can deal with both questions with one answer. Basically I think we have moved closer towards a consensus in the sense that different members, regardless of their political party backgrounds, realised fully that in order to achieve consensus on implementation of universal suffrage for the LegCo, we will need to convince various functional constituencies and members of the LegCo which represent these constituencies to adopt a formula which will replace the functional constituencies. This is a political reality, and this is not easy. But the very fact that members of the Commission which represent different political party affiliations and backgrounds, realise and face up to this point, this is a sort of progress for our discussions on implementation of universal suffrage.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

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