

Meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs
on 13 March 2000

Concluding observations of the UN Human Rights Committee on the
Report of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of
the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the light of the International
Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

The Human Rights Committee (the Committee) issued its concluding observations - reproduced at Annex - on 4 November 1999.

2. We are most attentive to what the Committee has said, not only their positive comments but also their concerns. We are considering them very carefully and positively with an open mind. Those issues are of great importance. Members of the Panel will, however, appreciate that our position in relation to them, as presented in our report and at the hearing, were formulated after the most careful consideration in response to the demands of the situations that they were intended to address.

3. It must be borne in mind that the development of human rights in Hong Kong has been progressive and positive and - in some cases - has been accomplished through prudent, incremental, progression. It is in that context that we are now considering our position on the Committee's conclusions and on the way forward.

4. But it should not be forgotten that the ICCPR hearing and the consideration of the concluding observations are just one aspect - albeit a highly important one - of our work in relation to human rights. Our ongoing efforts in that regard will continue apace. Those efforts include our

established programmes in the area of equal opportunities, our promotional activities, and the preparation and submission of our reports under the various human rights treaties.

5. Beyond those, we have undertaken special initiatives in affirmation of our commitment to the promulgation of human rights. One such initiative was the recent visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs Mary Robinson, who visited Hong Kong on 29 February 2000 at our invitation. Additionally, we have invited the United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC) - the Treaty Monitoring Body for the ICCPR - to visit the HKSAR for the first time since the reunification. We are pleased to advise the Panel that the HRC's Chairperson has accepted our invitation and has proposed that the visit take place in the second half of this year. To ensure that the Committee's representatives obtain a balanced picture and hear a wide range of opinions, their programme will include meetings with Legislative Councillors, NGOs and Government officials. We will advise the Panel as soon as the dates for the visit have been confirmed.

6. In the interim, we are grateful to the Panel for providing this opportunity for us to listen to Members' views, both in relation to the concluding observations themselves and to the substantive issues to which they relate. Those views will be a valuable contribution to our ongoing consideration of the Committee's observations.

Home Affairs Bureau

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