

**OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE SPECIAL MEETING**

Thursday, 2 September 2010

The Council met at half-past Two o'clock

MEMBERS PRESENT:

THE PRESIDENT

THE HONOURABLE JASPER TSANG YOK-SING, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT HO CHUN-YAN

THE HONOURABLE FRED LI WAH-MING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TO KUN-SUN

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG MAN-KWONG

THE HONOURABLE CHAN KAM-LAM, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS SOPHIE LEUNG LAU YAU-FUN, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG YIU-CHUNG

DR THE HONOURABLE PHILIP WONG YU-HONG, G.B.S.

THE HONOURABLE LAU WONG-FAT, G.B.M., G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MIRIAM LAU KIN-YEE, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE EMILY LAU WAI-HING, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW CHENG KAR-FOO

THE HONOURABLE TAM YIU-CHUNG, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ABRAHAM SHEK LAI-HIM, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LI FUNG-YING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TOMMY CHEUNG YU-YAN, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK FUNG KIN-KEE, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE AUDREY EU YUET-MEE, S.C., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE VINCENT FANG KANG, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LEE WING-TAT

DR THE HONOURABLE JOSEPH LEE KOK-LONG, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW LEUNG KWAN-YUEN, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG HOK-MING, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHIM PUI-CHUNG

PROF THE HONOURABLE PATRICK LAU SAU-SHING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE KAM NAI-WAI, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE CYD HO SAU-LAN

THE HONOURABLE STARRY LEE WAI-KING, J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE LAM TAI-FAI, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN HAK-KAN

THE HONOURABLE CHAN KIN-POR, J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE PRISCILLA LEUNG MEI-FUN

DR THE HONOURABLE LEUNG KA-LAU

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG KWOK-CHE

THE HONOURABLE WONG SING-CHI

THE HONOURABLE IP KWOK-HIM, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS REGINA IP LAU SUK-YEE, G.B.S., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE PAN PEY-CHYOU

THE HONOURABLE PAUL TSE WAI-CHUN

DR THE HONOURABLE SAMSON TAM WAI-HO, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TANYA CHAN

MEMBERS ABSENT:

IR DR THE HONOURABLE RAYMOND HO CHUNG-TAI, S.B.S., S.B.ST.J., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LEE CHEUK-YAN

DR THE HONOURABLE DAVID LI KWOK-PO, G.B.M., G.B.S., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE MARGARET NG

THE HONOURABLE WONG YUNG-KAN, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU KONG-WAH, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TIMOTHY FOK TSUN-TING, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG KWOK-HING, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE JEFFREY LAM KIN-FUNG, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG TING-KWONG, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE RONNY TONG KA-WAH, S.C.

THE HONOURABLE PAUL CHAN MO-PO, M.H., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG KWOK-KIN, B.B.S.

THE HONOURABLE IP WAI-MING, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE ALAN LEONG KAH-KIT, S.C.

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG KWOK-HUNG

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT CHAN WAI-YIP

THE HONOURABLE WONG YUK-MAN

PUBLIC OFFICERS ATTENDING:

THE HONOURABLE AMBROSE LEE SIU-KWONG, G.B.S., I.D.S.M., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR SECURITY

THE HONOURABLE MATTHEW CHEUNG KIN-CHUNG, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE

THE HONOURABLE MRS RITA LAU NG WAI-LAN, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MR LAI TUNG-KWOK, S.B.S., I.D.S.M., J.P.
UNDER SECRETARY FOR SECURITY

CLERKS IN ATTENDANCE:

MS PAULINE NG MAN-WAH, SECRETARY GENERAL

MRS JUSTINA LAM CHENG BO-LING, ASSISTANT SECRETARY
GENERAL

OBITUARY TRIBUTE

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Members will please remain standing to observe one minute's silence to mourn the Hong Kong people who died in the incident of a Hong Kong tour group being taken hostage in the Philippines.

MEMBERS' MOTIONS

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): In response to the request of Members, I call today's special meeting under Rule 15(2) of the Rules of Procedure to enable Members to debate on the motion on "The incident of a Hong Kong tour group being taken hostage in the Philippines".

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): In accordance with the Rules of Procedure and the House Rules, the mover of the motion may speak, including reply, for up to 15 minutes, and other Members each may speak for up to seven minutes.

Members who wish to speak in the debate on the motion will please press the "Request to speak" button.

I now call upon Ms Miriam LAU to speak and move the motion.

THE INCIDENT OF A HONG KONG TOUR GROUP BEING TAKEN HOSTAGE IN THE PHILIPPINES

MS MIRIAM LAU (in Cantonese): President, with sadness and indignation, and as Chairman of the House Committee, I move that the motion, as printed on the Agenda, be passed.

Over the past 10 days, Hong Kong people have lived through a difficult time with a heavy heart and, at the same time, they have witnessed the solidarity, love and care manifested through Hong Kong people considering Hong Kong their home.

In the morning of 23 August, a tour group of 21 Hong Kong residents was held hostage by a former Philippine policeman in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. When six tour group members, the local guide and photographers were released one after another, we expected that the incident could be resolved peacefully. Unfortunately, the incident ended in a tragedy before the very eyes of all the people in Hong Kong and around the world, resulting in the death of eight and injuries to seven Hong Kong people; four families have lost their beloved family members and two children were orphaned. The incident has caused grave concern in the community. Members belonging to different parties and groupings as well as independent Members have, for the first time, participated in an all-party rally to join members of the public in expressing the sadness and aspirations of Hong Kong people.

First of all, I wish to extend my profound condolences to the injured Hong Kong people and to the family members of the deceased and injured, and I hope that the injured can have a speedy recovery. Like many Hong Kong people, I cannot help but ask: Why did the hostage-taking incident end in bloodshed? From the live broadcast of the scene by the media, we could clearly see the lack of tactics, and the serious failures that had obviously occurred in the Philippine Government's operation to rescue the hostages. There were no rescue strategies, and the special force was inadequately equipped. As a result, the hostage-taking incident was still not resolved after 11 hours. As pointed out by our colleagues in the special meeting held by the Panel on Security on 26 August, the Philippine Government owed the family members of the deceased and injured a clear and specific account. Although the Philippine Government has commenced an investigation into the incident, how can Hong Kong people have complete trust in the investigation to be conducted by a government which has handled the incident so stupidly?

In order to find out the truth about the incident so as to give a clear account to the deceased and injured and their family members, and return justice to them, this Council demands the SAR Government to proactively strive to directly take part in the investigation. While members of the Legislative Council are well aware of the sovereignty of every country, I believe that, in respecting and without violating the sovereignty of other countries, there is scope for the SAR Government to take part in the relevant investigation and evidence collection work, so as to ensure that the investigation is carried out rigorously and impartially. Although Hong Kong police officers were permitted by the Philippine Government to board the coach in question on 30 August to collect

evidence, they were merely working in tandem with the investigation carried out by the Hong Kong Police Force rather than taking part in the investigation conducted by the Philippine Government. I hereby urge the SAR Government to relay the aspirations of Hong Kong people to the Central Government and through the Central Government, strongly demand the Philippine Government to allow the SAR Government to get directly involved in its investigation; as well as demand the Philippine Government to offer a public apology and compensation to the deceased and injured and their family members.

Many colleagues in this Council expressed approval and appreciation of the SAR Government's handling of this incident, as well as the measures and actions taken, which include liaising immediately upon learning the incident, with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR (OCMFA), the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines (the Embassy) and the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong, as well as making a telephone call to the Philippine President. When the situation worsened, the SAR Government made immediate arrangements for a chartered flight to bring the family members of the affected Hong Kong people, accompanied by relevant professionals, to Manila; issue Black Outbound Travel Alert for the Philippines, and fly flags at half-mast on 24 August. However, I must point out that there is still a lot of work for the SAR Government to do, including providing the injured with the most professional medical services and support, and providing the survivors and the family members of the deceased and injured with psychological and financial assistance, so as to help them resume normal life after grief. I hope the SAR Government can keep up its efforts in these respects.

President, given that travelling outside the territory has become part of the lives of Hong Kong people, it is indeed imperative for the SAR Government to review jointly with the tourism sector ways to safeguard the safety of Hong Kong people who travel outside the territory. The SAR Government must also, in the light of this incident, review the arrangements which ought to be taken should similar incidents occur in the future, formulate a contingency mechanism, clearly define the negotiation channels for the SAR Government and its role in incidents involving Hong Kong people in distress overseas, so as to ensure that the SAR Government can liaise closely with the highest-level officials of the places where such incidents occur and take timely actions to ensure the safety of Hong Kong people.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Embassy and the OCMFA for providing full assistance in handling the incident and in overcoming various obstacles encountered in the follow-up tasks.

President, below I will, on behalf of the Liberal Party, express the view on this incident.

The hostage-taking tragedy in the Philippines has touched the hearts of mine and countless Hong Kong people. I believe many people can still not forget the heart-stirring scenes broadcast live on 23 August on the television. Although I was in the United States on that day, I had been watching closely the Hong Kong news broadcast there. When I heard that 21 Hong Kong people were taken hostage in Manila, I had only this thought in mind: it is most important to ensure the safety of these Hong Kong people. My heart suddenly sank when I learnt the tragic news that so many Hong Kong people were either dead or injured. I was saddened and overwhelmed with grief that these innocent people have lost their lives.

23 August must be a day of great distress and indignation for Hong Kong people. Last Sunday, 80 000 Hong Kong people took part in a major rally to demand the Philippine Government to treat this tragedy seriously by conducting an impartial and professional investigation. I think the Philippine authorities cannot evade any further and must address these aspirations squarely.

As a matter of fact, regarding the causes and details of the tragedy, the Philippine authorities have given people right from the beginning an impression that they were indifferent to the incident and did not take the matter seriously. It was only until the Central Government made a strong demand that the Philippine authorities agreed to conduct an in-depth investigation. During the hostage-taking incident, the spokesman for the Philippine President even proclaimed that "the President would not negotiate with the gunman". Throughout the rescue operation, the authorities were like "playing children's games", paying no heed to the lives of the hostages. There were neither any planning nor strategies; and there was a lack of proper equipment. When the elite troops of the military arrived at the scene, they were just bystanders and did not get involved in the rescue operation. They had completely failed to comply with the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages, which

requires, among other things, that "the safety of hostages must be put on the paramount position for negotiations and consideration". It is even more ridiculous that the Philippine President wore a smile on his face when he inspected the scene and responded to reporters after the incident. Despite his clarification and apology to the Chief Executive afterwards, his attitude and the many obstacles and the setbacks experienced by the Hong Kong Police Force when collecting evidence in the Philippines have inevitably undermined the confidence of Hong Kong people in the ability of the Philippine authorities in conducting a serious investigation into the hostage-taking tragedy.

When the Liberal Party protested at the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong the next day after the occurrence of the tragedy, we used the expression "草菅人命" (meaning treating human lives with utter disregard) to criticize the Philippine Government for behaving in a cold-blooded and insensitive manner in the hostage-taking tragedy. At the same time, we cautioned that they should seriously get the aftermath work done properly.

As regards the remarks made by Philippine Justice Secretary the other day that the report on the tragedy would be completed within 10 days and that the case would be investigated fully with a fair, just and open attitude, I hope that she could really live up to her words. We hope that the Philippine Government can mend the fold before it is too late by conducting an investigation to find out the truth of the hostage-taking tragedy at all possible levels with a professional and impartial attitude, and give an account to Hong Kong people as to why the entire rescue operation flopped, what mistakes have been made, who should be held responsible, and what responsibilities should be taken. The Philippine authorities must not dodge any more, it must give an absolutely clear account in a solemn manner.

After many twists and turns and several rounds of negotiations, the Hong Kong Police Force was finally permitted to carry out a certain degree of evidence collection in the Philippines. However, the evidence collected will only be used to facilitate the investigation carried out by the Hong Kong authorities, as separate investigations are being carried out by the Philippines and Hong Kong. Of course, there will be no problems if the outcomes of their investigations are the same. However, there are bound to be more disputes if there are discrepancies with the results, and the investigations will not help uncover the truth of the entire incident. Therefore, we hope that the SAR Government can

relay the aspirations of Hong Kong people to the Central Government and demand the Philippine Government to allow the Hong Kong Police Force to directly take part in its investigation to help us gain a clear understanding of the entire incident, so as to do justice to the 15 deceased or injured hostages.

The Philippine authorities have indicated their intention to give comfort fund to the deceased and injured Hong Kong hostages. However, we think that this is inadequate because the repeated mistakes made by the Philippine Government in the hostage-taking incident have led to the deaths of eight innocent people in the incident. Therefore, the Philippine Government should offer Hong Kong people a solemn apology and compensation. Of course, I think what the family members of the deceased and survivors want most is an investigation report that can clearly track down the responsible party in connection with the incident.

President, I believe Members are well aware that the SAR Government had obviously made some progress in handling this hostage-taking incident, compared to its handling of the Red Shirt Army incident occurred in Thailand in 2008, for its action was now swifter and more resolute. However, the telephone call made by the Chief Executive, upon learning the hostage-taking incident, to the Philippine President to request him to address squarely the safety of the hostages was not answered. People cannot but doubt whether there a need to further improve or enhance the existing negotiation channels and the role played by the SAR Government in incidents involving Hong Kong people in distress overseas?

I do not mean that the SAR Government should additionally play a special diplomatic role, or that the Central Government has done anything wrong in assisting the Hong Kong Government in dealing with this incident. On the contrary, I think Hong Kong people consider it appropriate for President HU Jintao and Premier WEN Jiabao to extend sympathy to Hong Kong people soon after learning that some hostages were killed and for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China to follow up the development of the incident and negotiate with the Philippine authorities after learning the hostage-taking incident.

As the issue involves the safety of Hong Kong people overseas, all Members take the matter very seriously. As the saying goes, human lives are

crucial, and saving lives is like putting off fires. No delay can be allowed during critical moments. Although the Basic Law provides that national defence and diplomacy are matters to be dealt with by the Central Authorities, the Basic Law has, at the same time, provided that the SAR Government may conduct "external affairs" on its own. This is why when Hong Kong people are in distress overseas, we all expect the SAR Government to make a proper response promptly through a suitable channel. At the same time, it should liaise closely with the Central authorities in Hong Kong, so that a two-pronged approach can be taken to ensure the personal safety of Hong Kong people overseas. In this connection, we hope that the SAR Government can discuss with the OCMFA the formulation of contingency measures to be taken by the SAR Government when Hong Kong people are in distress overseas without "contravening the Basic Law" and "intervening with the sovereignty of other countries", so that the SAR Government can make intervention, render assistance and conduct investigation in a timely manner.

Although this incident is heart-breaking for Hong Kong people, we have also seen the glorious side of human nature, including Mr TSE Ting-chunn, Masa, who wasted no time in reporting the incident; Mrs FU, who saved the son of a member of her tour group; Mr LEUNG Kam-wing, who scarified his own life to save other tour group members; and others. Their noble integrity has aroused great respect among Hong Kong people. Hence, we hope that the Hong Kong Government can show appropriate appreciation to all heroic tour group members in recognition of their acts of courage.

Lastly, we sincerely hope that the Hong Kong people who were killed in this incident can rest in peace and all the injured can recover expeditiously. In particular, we hope that LEUNG Chung-hok, Jason, who is still in coma, can regain consciousness at an early date and all survivors can pick themselves up and lead normal lives again as early as possible. We also believe that Hong Kong people will act rationally, the poor and improper performance of the Philippine Government at the initial stage and its nationals should be treated separately, so as to promote the spirit of friendship, equality and mutual assistance on a continuous basis.

With these remarks, President, I beg to move.

Ms Miriam LAU moved the following motion: (Translation)

"That this Council is deeply shocked and saddened that the taking of a Hong Kong tour group as hostages by a gunman on 23 August this year during its visit to the Philippines has ended up in a tragedy with heavy casualties, and wishes to express its profound condolences to the Hong Kong people who died and extend its deepest sympathy to those who were injured and to the family members of the deceased and injured; this Council expresses its strong dissatisfaction at the serious failures that had obviously occurred in the Philippine Government's operation to rescue the hostages which resulted in innocent Hong Kong people being killed, and urges the SAR Government to:

- (a) solemnly demand the Philippine Government to expeditiously conduct an investigation into the incident; proactively strive to directly take part in the investigation work concerned to find out the truth about the incident and make public the investigation report so as to give a clear account to the deceased and injured and their family members; and demand the Philippine Government to offer a public apology and compensation to the deceased and injured and their family members;
- (b) expeditiously take measures and actions to render full assistance to the injured and survivors as well as the family members of the deceased and injured;
- (c) formulate a contingency mechanism to deal with similar incidents in the future and clearly define the negotiation channels for the SAR Government and its role in incidents involving Hong Kong people in distress overseas; and
- (d) discuss with the tourism sector the relevant follow-up work."

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Ms Miriam LAU be passed.

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY (in Cantonese): President, 23 August was a day of city-wide anguish in Hong Kong. In Manila, eight innocent Hong Kong people were killed in an unexpected incident of violence. Seven other Hong Kong people were injured. Three of the injured are still in critical conditions and being hospitalized.

Last Sunday, hundreds of thousands of people took part in a rally organized by Legislative Council Members from different political parties or groupings. In a silent procession, the participants mourned the deceased, showed their concern about the injured, and strongly demanded the Philippine authorities to find out the truth and give a fair account.

As remarked by the Chief Executive, at this very moment, only a thorough and impartial investigation into the incident could return justice to the deceased and injured. Uncovering the truth and giving the Hong Kong victims a clear account of what happened are the consensus of the Government of the Special Administrative Region (SAR), Legislative Council Members and all Hong Kong people.

Regarding the motion today, I shall respond on behalf of the SAR Government to the first point on the conduct of an investigation, and the third point on the formulation of a contingency mechanism to deal with similar incidents. Later on, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare shall give a detailed reply to the second point on providing assistance to the family members of the deceased and injured. The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development shall respond to the fourth point on discussing the follow-up work with the tourism sector.

On the night of the incident and the following day, the Chief Secretary for Administration of the SAR Government twice summoned the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong, demanding the Philippine Government to carry out an impartial, thorough and comprehensive investigation. When the Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines (the Chinese Ambassador) met with President AQUINO of the Philippines together with the Under Secretary for Security, he likewise put forward this strong demand and received an undertaking from the Philippine President during the meeting.

As disclosed by the Chief Executive in the radio programme "Letter to Hong Kong" on 28 August, he already wrote a formal letter to President

AQUINO on 26 August, reiterating his solemn demand for a full-scale and professional investigation by the Philippine Government. In the Chief Executive's letter, it is stated that the investigation report by the Philippine Government must cover several crucial issues in detail: first, how the incident unfolded, including details of the police operation and the considerations behind; second, a detailed account of the Philippine authorities' negotiations with the gunman, with particular reference to why they could not comply with the gunman's request to secure the release of the hostages; and, third, the causes of the casualties. The Chief Executive further stated in the letter that the investigation report must be supported by sufficient facts.

The Philippine Government has notified us through the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines that it has established an inquiry committee led by its Department of Justice. As we have learnt from the mass media, the Philippine President and Department of Justice have repeatedly undertaken in public that they would conduct a thorough, impartial and comprehensive investigation, without suppressing the truth and being partial. We hope that the Philippine authorities can honour their commitment by taking concrete actions and releasing their investigation report later on.

In another development, the Hong Kong coroner has ordered the Hong Kong Police to conduct an investigation into the death of the eight Hong Kong people. After receiving the police investigation report and the relevant autopsy reports, the coroner will decide whether a death inquiry should be conducted.

Since the outbreak of the incident, Hong Kong police officers have been deployed to Manila to collect evidence and conduct investigation through international police co-operation. We have also received a confirmation from the Philippine Government that it would do its best to provide assistance, so that the Hong Kong Police could proceed smoothly with their independent investigation. By now, the Police have basically completed some major tasks, such as evidence collection inside the coach and the forensic examination of the firearms concerned. The Police will submit their investigation findings to the coroner as soon as possible for an early decision.

The motion demands the Philippine Government to offer a public apology and compensation to the deceased and injured and their family members.

Actually, as I have mentioned, when the Chinese Ambassador met with the Philippine President on 24 August, he strongly condemned this incident of violence and urged the Philippine Government to expeditiously inform the Chinese side and the SAR Government of the investigation findings, make continuous effort to actively provide the injured with medical treatment, properly handle all follow-up work and assist in making arrangements for the injured and the dead bodies of the deceased to return to Hong Kong as soon as possible. In Hong Kong, the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong has tendered a public apology for the incident several times. We believe that to the victims and their family members, the prime concern at this moment is to ascertain the truth as soon as possible. The SAR Government will definitely, on the basis of evidence and facts, follow up the question of accountability upon the completion of the investigation, with a view to returning justice to the deceased and the injured and their family members.

To assist Hong Kong people caught in distress or calamities overseas, the Security Bureau formulated the Contingency Plan for Emergency Response Operations outside the HKSAR (the contingency plan) following the tsunami in South Asia. Last year, we carried out a comprehensive review of the contingency plan and submitted the findings and recommendations to the Legislative Council Panel on Security in the middle of the same year, with a view to enhancing the assistance for Hong Kong people caught in distress outside Hong Kong. A total of 30 improvement measures were put forward, and most of them have been put into practice. The experience of this unpleasant incident has indicated that the enhanced contingency plan is more effective than before. We will of course review the contingency plan on a continuous basis, and we will also listen to Members' advice with an open mind, with a view to perfecting the contingency plan and providing Hong Kong people caught in distress overseas with better and more effective assistance.

Put simply, there is a three-tier response system under the contingency plan. Under Tier One when the risk to personal safety is relatively low, the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit (AHU) of the Immigration Department will provide assistance. If the situation worsens, the incident may be escalated to Tier Two, an inter-departmental coordinating team led by the Security Bureau will oversee the provision of emergency co-ordination and contingency actions. Significant emergencies are treated as cases for Tier Three. Take this incident

as an example, the Chief Executive himself chaired the meeting that very night to map out an emergency assistance operation. A support team would accompany the victims' family members in Hong Kong to Manila on the government-chartered flight. A number of support measures and follow-up operations were also put in place in both Hong Kong and Manila.

I believe Hong Kong people can feel that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State, especially the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong SAR (OCMFA) and the Chinese Embassy in Manila (the Embassy), have always, on the premise of protecting Hong Kong people's safety and meeting the needs of the Hong Kong people in distress and their family members, strived for their interests in various aspects, and have also, on more than one occasion, solemnly raised the issue to the highest leader of the Philippine Government. Members may also be aware that around 11 am on 23 August, when the Immigration Department received the first telephone call requesting assistance, the AHU immediately activated the contingency plan. Apart from notifying the Security Bureau, the AHU also liaised with the OCMFA and the Embassy, requesting for incident updates and all necessary assistance. The Embassy immediately deployed its staff to the scene, and they arrived at the scene at around 12 pm that day. When the first batch of SAR officers arrived at Manila at around 4 pm or 5 pm, staff of the Embassy immediately worked with our officers to provide assistance.

From then on, the SAR Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintained close contacts all the time. When the situation took a sharp turn for the worse, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately dispatched a working team from Beijing to Manila to back up the SAR support team in dealing with the aftermath of the incident.

Had the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy not rendered their full support and diplomatic back-up, it would have been impossible for the SAR support team to complete all the onerous formalities within such a short span of time; the successful arrangement of transporting all bodies of the deceased, the injured tour group member, as well as family members back to Hong Kong on the same chartered flight is a case in point. Thanks to the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in many aspects, the Hong Kong Police are now able to proceed smoothly with their investigation in Manila. Undoubtedly, without the

unequivocal position and strong support of the State's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the SAR support team would not have been able to complete its rescue tasks within such a short time.

Besides expressing my gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its assistance, I also wish to thank all government departments and public organizations (such as the Airport Authority and the Hospital Authority) which have involved in the work of the support team; as well as Cathy Pacific Airline, Hong Thai Travel Services Limited and the insurance companies concerned. They pitched in to provide assistance to the SAR Government in many different areas, doing their utmost to make proper follow-up arrangements for the deceased and the injured and their family members. Some of them even volunteered to provide exceptional resources and help. I believe that like me, Hong Kong people are highly appreciative of their selflessness and warm-heartedness.

In this incident, the various social sectors in Hong Kong have shown immeasurable unity, love and care. The strength of character of the family members of the deceased and injured have shown us the bright side of human nature. I understand that the Legislative Council and members of the public have very high expectations of the SAR Government's in dealing with the aftermath of the incident and in handling similar incidents in the future. The Security Bureau and other government departments have certainly learnt a lesson from this incident and reviews will be conducted to see if there is any further room for improving the contingency plan.

I wish to thank the Honourable Member who has put forward this motion to enable our society to forge a consensus. I also wish that the injured can recover soon, and the families that have sustained such a great trauma can be consoled. The SAR Government and all Hong Kong people will give them support and the best of all wishes.

Thank you, President.

SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE (in Cantonese): President, I shall speak later.

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): President, I shall likewise speak later.

DR PRISCILLA LEUNG (in Cantonese): President, first of all, I would like to pay the highest tribute to the eight deceased victims and their noble souls. I know Mr and Mrs LEUNG, and Mr FU graduated from the City University of Hong Kong in 1997, so behaved very strongly I have not yet calmed down since the outbreak of the incident. I believe all members of the public would express immeasurable sympathy and support for those who survived in this incident.

At present, the SAR Government should continue to investigate the case and track down the responsibilities of the Philippine Government, it should also provide feasible support to the injured and orphaned children, so as to assist them in meeting education, medical and living expenses, and so on in the future. In my opinion, the Government should regard their cases as those requiring "permanent care". It should also set up funds to meet their basic living needs. I trust that the public and Honourable Members would support this.

In this incident, the devilish policeman MENDOZA claimed that he acted for the sake of justice, yet what he did actually trampled upon lives and justice, which was condemned by people all over the world. His soul will be trampled upon and reprimanded forever. Conversely, the precious soul of each and every deceased victim will be well praised by generations to come. In fact, it is often at the most critical moment of calamities that we can see the loftiest spirit of sacrificing one's own interests for the sake of others. In this tragedy, Mr LEUNG and his daughters had no fear for their personal safety; instead, they used their bodies to protect people around them at the most critical moment. Mrs FU remained calm in the face of danger and unselfishly rescued a child. Their great love and unselfishness, their lofty sentiments in sacrificing oneself for other people and for righteousness are the pride of Hong Kong people. Eight lives were futilely lost, but these people did not die for nothing, for their lofty spirits will have everlasting impacts on others. As stated in the Bible, "I have made a good fight, I have come to the end of my journey, I have kept the faith". We will miss them forever.

As regards the motion today, I proposed to President, Mr Jasper TSANG, some suggestions about items (b), (c) and (d) on 24 August. Before the motion was proposed, we lobbied for other Honourable colleagues' consent that the Chairman of the House Committee would move the motion to show the unity of Legislative Council Members. On item (b) of the motion, I hope the SAR Government could respond clearly to my suggestion of setting up a special fund for the provision of "permanent care". Moreover, I hope the Government can respond to the question concerning medical services.

Concerning item (c) of the motion, some Honourable colleagues raised opposition when I proposed this item, but the item was retained after discussions. In item (c) as I proposed, I have clearly stated that I would like to help the SAR Government get a clearer idea of its role in incidents involving Hong Kong people in distress overseas in the future.

This morning, I explained this point in a radio programme, and I called upon Honourable colleagues not to quibble over some academic concepts such as "sub-diplomatic right" and "sub-sovereignty". Once these concepts are discussed, we will quibble over academic discussions, giving rise to unnecessary controversies, suspicions, jealousy and disputes because no such provision are made in Article 13 of the Basic Law. Some members of the public wrongly interpreted that I oppose discussions. If I oppose discussions, how would I be the first one to suggest to the President that we should, at this point in time, consider the role of the Government in incidents involving Hong Kong people in distress overseas in the future and provide an explicit definition?

We opine that if this motion is moved by the Chairman of the House Committee, more efforts can be pulled together, and we hope that the discussion of the issue would not end up with controversies. Thus, I call upon Honourable colleagues to discuss this issue on the basis of Article 13 (3) of the Basic Law, explore how the SAR Government can handle external affairs on its own, and put forward more constructive suggestions. The present discussion reflects that most of us are very impatient because we are highly concerned about how the Government will handle similar emergency matters in the future.

The Secretary just said that a contingency mechanism has been established, and I hope the Secretary would tell us what difficulties have been encountered

after the contingency mechanisms have been activated. This can facilitate more explicit and specific discussions by Legislative Council Members.

People who died cannot return to life. Yet, though in great grief, we must spare no effort to seek justice for the deceased in this tragedy, provide the best treatment to the injured, as well as fight for the most reasonable compensations from the Philippine Government on behalf of the survivors.

I believe the Government is now taking actions to seek justice for the deceased. I would like to share my experience in connection with medical services. My mother-in-law experienced a medical miracle in 1994. She had a stroke when she was 66 years old and she underwent a brain operation afterwards, but she ended up in a vegetative state. Later, she received treatment at the China-Japan Friendship Hospital in Beijing. Under the joint diagnosis of the Chinese and Japanese doctors, she miraculously recovered half a year later. When she woke up, she told us that during the six months when she was in coma, every word we said to her and the sound records of her friends have stimulated her to regain consciousness. At last, she lived until she was over 80 and she spent her life very happily.

Hence, I would like to say to Mrs LEUNG, Jason, Mrs FU, Miss YIK and Mr CHAN: "Brace up, there are medical miracles, our greatest concern is your speedy recovery and returning to normal life".

In any case, I also hope that the Government can make the greatest effort in this connection and provide them with the best medical services. I so submit.

DR PAN PEY-CHYOU (in Cantonese): President, on 23 August, a tour group from Hong Kong met with a grave misfortune in Manila, Philippines; eight tour group members lost their lives and seven members were injured. On behalf of the Honourable Members from the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (FTU), I express profound condolences to the deceased and wish the injured a speedy recovery. We are especially concerned about Jason, the young boy suffering from severe brain injuries. We hope he would recover as quickly as possible and resume his normal life.

From this incident, we have witnessed that the Philippine Government has, generally speaking, handled the case foolishly, illogically and dangerously. Why do I say so? First, the gunman MENDOZA was relatively calm and relaxed at the very beginning, we saw him carrying the rifle and moving to the door of the tourist coach without any cover-up, he was at ease then. However, we noticed that as time dragged on, the gunmen could not get any concessions and his physical needs had not been well catered to, he gradually became impatient. The gunman turned from a calm and experienced man at the beginning to become increasingly impatient. When the Philippine authorities asked his brother to surrender his firearm and arrested him, the gunman suddenly turned indignant and went out of control. The Philippine authorities then clumsily initiated the rescue operation, the gunman was like a beast being trapped inside the coach compartment. Agitated by the violent tapping outside the coach compartment, he became increasingly ruthless and gradually went out of control, fighting desperately like a cornered animal. Any sensible person would sense that the situation was extremely dangerous. At the end, the only way out is to kill and get killed. So, I dare say in this Council that the Philippine Government handled the incident foolishly, illogically and dangerously.

Concerning the incident, firstly, I would like to praise the SAR Government for the contingency measures taken. In particular, I would like to praise our medical staff. Emergency physicians and nurses were the first batch of medical staff to Manila. Later, other medical staff also arrived to provide consultation services and arrange for the safe return of the injured to Hong Kong. Also, Dr Dawson FONG and his brain surgery team from the Tuen Mun Hospital operated on Jason. I would like to declare interests because Dr Dawson FONG and I were schoolmates in the same grade both in secondary school and at university, and I have known him many years. He is an excellent doctor. Putting personal relationship aside, I can say that he has done really well this time and his team has also done a great job.

The public had reacted strongly after the tragedy. As a medical staff specialized in psychiatric services, my analysis is that, this group of Hong Kong people who met with misfortune are just like our friends and even family members. Like us, they work or study in Hong Kong, and they travel abroad happily with their family members during their vacations; who would have

expected that they met with misfortune. Secondly, through the modern media, scenes in the faraway city of Manila could be brought to our living room or bedroom, and we saw with our own eyes what had actually happened, as if we were at the scene. For this reason, many Hong Kong people felt that they were personally involved in the incident.

Last Sunday, on the seventh day of the victim's death, 80 000 Hong Kong people took to the street in silence. Together, we mourned for the death and protested against the Philippine authorities' foolish and unreasonable handling of the incident. Under the burning sun on that day, it seemed as though people's hearts were on fire. Eleven days have passed after the incident, and I have been observing the response of Hong Kong people; my impression is that people are still emotionally perturbed after so many days. After a disaster, it is normal for people to have short-term emotional distress. Even the more serious cases of acute stress disorder are not important problems and they can be solved through counselling. Yet, I am more worried that some people may suffer from longer-term post-traumatic stress disorder.

There are certain reasons for my worries. I have recently searched some medical literature and I have found a lot of researches on post-traumatic stress disorder carried out after the September 11 incident. The results showed that some people who did not have personal experience of an incident might also suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder so long as they have come across the incident through the electronic media. I would like to say that, research data showed that around 5% children and 1% adults may have the problem. Hence, I am now contacting some colleagues who provide psychiatric services, with a view to providing voluntary services to people in need. If people still have emotional problems more than one month from now, they can seek assistance from us and undergo evaluations. Nonetheless, it is more important for the Government to take up the responsibility. I hope the Government can provide appropriate and timely services to people in need through the Hospital Authority.

With these remarks, I support the motion.

MR TAM YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): President, the incident of a Hong Kong tour group being taken hostage in Manila, Philippines, by a former policeman was

televised live. Many people of Hong Kong had, through the television channel, witnessed how the Philippine police's rescue operation was incompetently conducted and directed. They witnessed how their fellow citizens were gunned down, how the injured person escaped from the devilish cop and how shattered the survivors were after the incident. The whole territory was filled with great pain and rage.

Over the past few days, the various memorial services, the messages of condolence that drove people to tears, as well as scenes that touched the heart of people have brought the people of Hong Kong, who are strangers to each other, together to share the sorrow and grief. Behind scenes of tears and sadness, the unity and mutual care and attention of Hong Kong people were manifested. The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong hopes that the care and blessings extended by the people of Hong Kong can bring warmth and consolation to family members of the deceased and injured.

The blood of our fellow citizens cannot be spilled for no cause. Last Sunday, the people of Hong Kong translated their grief into actions. As many as 80 000 people took to the streets in solemn silence and with a heavy heart, expressing their strong dissatisfaction with the Philippine Government and demanding an investigation to be conducted to find out the truth, so as to do justice to the dead. The rally was held in an orderly manner, which well demonstrated the highly admirable civilized quality of our citizens. Hong Kong people are embittered about the Philippine police's inept rescue operation. There were worries that the incident will instigate hatred against other Philippine people in Hong Kong. However, we did not hear any words or see any banners expressing racial hatred during the rally. And in all self-initiated activities to mourn the dead, the people only insisted, in a peaceful and rational manner, that a thorough investigation should be conducted and those who are to be held accountable should be identified. The amicable relationship between the Hong Kong residents and the Philippine people has not been affected by this hostage-taking incident.

Upon learning this incident, the Central Authorities at once showed great concerns. The Minister of Foreign Affairs YANG Jie-chi called the Philippine

Secretary for Foreign Affairs, demanding that all efforts be taken to rescue the hostages. Senior staff from the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines immediately arrived at the scene to negotiate with the Philippine police, requesting that the incident be resolved timely and properly to ensure the safety of the hostages. When the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC in HKSAR (OCMFA) learnt from the Security Bureau of the hostage crisis at 11:20 am on 23 August, it notified the Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately and requested the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong for incident updates. At 11:28 am the OCMFA gave a feedback to the Security Bureau that the Charge D'Affaires ad interim and the counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines were already coordinating the rescue efforts at the scene. Members may refer to the website of the OCMFA for the sequence of events relating to the rescue operation on 23 August.

After the incident, as Philippine Government attempted to cover up its faults and present specious arguments to evade responsibility, as well as obstruct Hong Kong Police's evidence collection work, the Central Authorities have, through statements, negotiations and real actions, provided assistance to the Hong Kong Police, so that they could attend relevant conferences held in Manila and board the coach in question to collect evidence. The Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines also condemned that the coffin of MENDOZA was draped by a national flag by his family. This diplomatic move was to avoid rubbing more salt into the wounds of Hong Kong people. With the full support of and negotiations made by the Central Government, the SAR Government was duly treated in its handling of the hostage crisis. As emphasized repeatedly by our state leaders, our motherland is the firm bulwark and strong support for Hong Kong. We believe that through this incident, the people of Hong Kong can feel the care and support from the Central Authorities.

As for the SAR Government, it acted swiftly in this incident. Upon learning the incident, it immediately informed the OCMFA and the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines, requesting for incident updates and assistance; and the crisis handling mechanism was activated by setting up an interdepartmental task force. After gunshots were fired, the Government immediately arranged a chartered flight to bring the family members of the affected Hong Kong residents

to Manila to learn about the situation and bring warm and consolation to the injured and the survivors. The Government made a bold decision to send a medical plane to bring the seriously injured back to Hong Kong so that they could receive better medical care. It has proven by facts that the less advanced medical technology in the Philippines failed to provide adequate treatment to the injured Hong Kong residents. Moreover, the Security Bureau instantly issued a black outbound travel alert, which provided a basis for local tourist agencies to cancel their tours to the Philippines. These decisions made and actions taken have well illustrated an acceptable level of crisis management.

The trauma and impact brought about by the killing of the hostages cannot go away within a short span of time. We hope that the SAR Government can offer full support to the injured, the survivors and their families. Such support should include their needs in health care, housing and education, as well as legal proceedings in the future to claim compensation from the Philippine Government.

Yesterday, we were relieved to hear the news that Jason's body temperature had returned to normal and Jason's mother Mrs LEUNG had called on the Hong Kong people to brace up and lead a normal life again. On behalf of the DAB, I offer my deepest condolences to the deceased and my best wishes to the injured and their families. I hope that they can have a speedy recovery. The DAB also hopes that the truth about the incident can be made public soon. As such, the deceased can rest in peace while the living can feel relieved and go on with their lives.

I so submit to support the motion.

PROF PATRICK LAU (in Cantonese): President, thank you for arranging this special meeting today so that Members can have a chance to express their views on the hostage-taking incident in the Philippines. First of all, I wish to offer my sympathies to the families of the deceased and my best wishes to the injured for their early recovery. I also hope that the people of Hong Kong and the Government can leave their sorrow behind and adopt a positive attitude to find out the truth and offer full-scale assistance to those affected by the incident.

Apart from condemning the Philippine Government for its bungled handling of the incident, I think we can make use of this incident to educate the community. First, life should be treasured. Second, union is strength. Third, people should care for each other. I hope that these three factors can release some positive energy, so as to alleviate the negative feelings in society such as sorrow and resentment.

First, I am extremely shocked by the serious casualties in this tragedy. The biggest problem is the disrespect of life by the Philippine authorities. More and more Hong Kong people now realize how precious life is. A pleasure trip for the family suddenly turned out to be a life-threatening experience. When the whole territory are cheering up and praying for the injured tour group member, we, and young people in particular, have learnt to cherish life.

At first, everyone thought that if the simple request for reinstatement was granted, the issue could be resolved peacefully; yet, we saw, through live broadcast by television channel, living people being gunned down, and after rounds of fire shots, dead silence in the coach. The televised images had touched every member of Hong Kong, and filled them with grief and indignation.

At that moment, I could not help but ask: Why did the Philippine Government not accede to the gunman's request for reinstatement first to ensure the safety of the hostages? Why did the Philippine authorities take no actions despite repeated warnings of the gunman to kill the hostages? Why did the gunman get provoked and lost his control, thus killing the hostages? During the negotiation with the gunman, did the Philippine authorities attach any importance to the grave concern expressed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the Hong Kong Government over the safety of the hostages? Why were there so many blunders in the rescue operation carried out by the special police force of the Philippines? We had the impression that the actions taken were unplanned, uncoordinated, and police officers were unequipped, acting with no courage and efficiency, and in no way up to a professional standard.

Most importantly, after the first shot, why did it take more than one hour to put the situation under control? And why did it take almost two hours to move the hostages out of the coach? I felt sad because as time ticked away, the

survival chances of the hostages in the coach would be diminishing. Why were bold and resolute actions not taken? Did they value people's lives at all? Could the problem be solved by other means, such as money? Were there any hidden facts? A lot of questions have been asked, some are social and political ones. But should the lives of Hong Kong people be sacrificed for no reasons? There must be an answer to all these questions and a clear explanation must be given to the Hong Kong people.

This incident which caused eight deaths and seven injuries has brought profound grief to Hong Kong people. The only gratifying point is that the incident has brought all Hong Kong people together. The mourning activities, requiem mass, messages in the chat rooms, and the rally organized swiftly by Members of this Council from various political parties and groupings, were protests against the Philippine Government in silence. More than 80 000 people joined the Legislative Council Members in the rally, demanding for a thorough investigation by the Philippines authorities, and requesting for full assistance to representatives from Hong Kong to conduct an investigation in Manila. I believe the force of unity has worked. It also proves that the Hong Kong people and Members of this Council are not disunited. This is also a good chance to teach the citizens the importance of solidarity.

President, I agree very much with Mrs LEUNG, the mother of Jason, who urged the people of Hong Kong to brace up and lead a normal life. I support the demands made in the motion that a clear account of the incident should be given by the Philippine Government, that an apology and compensation should be made. Most important of all, I think a contingency mechanism should be set up and that the diplomatic role played by the SAR Government in handling emergencies concerning Hong Kong people overseas should be defined. I am aware that in this incident, full support was given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines, so that the aftermath work can be carried out smoothly. I am very pleased to learn from the Secretary when he spoke on the motion earlier on that a permanent mechanism would be set up so that in times of emergencies, information can be swiftly transferred to the corresponding units to enable better communication.

As seen from this incident, Hong Kong and the Central Government are closely linked. The Central Authorities and people in the Mainland feel the same grief as people in Hong Kong. They were able to extend a helping hand and do their best to provide assistance, in much the same way as people from all walks of life in Hong Kong show their spirit of mutual concern. We are especially impressed by Mrs LEUNG, while suffering from the loss of her three beloved family members, she still plays her role as a mother and takes good care of her son who is injured in the incident. In the face of such great adversity, she remains rational, and even cares for other people, encouraging them to be strong. The spirit of mutual care and love manifested through Mrs LEUNG and other members of the tour group should be a good lesson for us all. I hope we can all reflect on this incident and learn to cherish life, be united and care for each other, hence bringing a positive force to Hong Kong.

I so submit. Thank you, President.

MR ALBERT HO (in Cantonese): President, on behalf of the Democratic Party, I express our profound condolences to the family members of the victims of the hostage-taking tragedy that occurred in Manila on 23 August in which eight people died and five were injured. I would also like to send our regards to the survivors and the injured who are still receiving treatment in hospitals in the hope that they can recover expeditiously. In particular, I wish to pay tribute to the wife of LEUNG Kam-wing, also the mother of Jason LEUNG. Her courage has touched many people and gained the support of Hong Kong people. With all the blessings of Hong Kong people, I believe Jason will be out of danger and recover expeditiously.

The continuous broadcast of the hostage-taking tragedy in Manila on television on that day and subsequently, the shooting of innocent people, has touched the hearts, and even the nerves, of the public at large in Hong Kong. When the incident ended in tragedy, many of us experienced anxiety, disturbance, shock and lastly, sadness and anger. The atrocity of the shooting of innocent people by this cold-blooded gunman must be severely reprimanded again. The series of blunders made by the Philippines police force in handling this incident has reflected not only the culture of its police force, but also some possible structural problems. First, it would really be reckless of them to handle the

crisis with the thinking that this was just one of the usual hostage-taking incidents commonly occurred in the Philippine, and that it was very likely that the gunman simply wished to seize the opportunity of media exposure by making a fuss in order to gain publicity without any actual intention of killing people. Their attitude of taking the matter lightly had led to the tragedy. Second, from the negotiations and even the subsequent rescue operation, we could see that there was no meticulous planning on the part of the authorities concerned. Moreover, many of their reckless and unwise acts, including the detention of the brother of the gunman, the shooting of the tyres of the coach, and so on, had not only failed to resolve the matter, but also got on the nerve of the gunman, resulting in his extremely foolish act of shooting in panic and fury. Hence, we can simply not understand all this.

To sum up, the Philippine police force responsible for handling this crisis on that day appeared to be inexperienced and lacking adequate training in rescuing hostages, and so on. Their equipment has also made us doubt their professionalism. Their way of handling the entire incident, that is to say, the entire operation conducted by the police force at the scene on that day, and even the response of the leadership of the Philippine Government, including the President, has also made us doubt how far human lives were respected by this country. This is why we find it necessary to put this question to the Philippine authorities and demand a positive response from them. After the incident, the strong reaction of all the people of Hong Kong and a series of campaigns launched in the community, including expressing condolences, issuing statements and launching signature campaigns, as mentioned by some colleagues earlier, have unanimously called on the Philippine Government to conduct a solemn investigation into the entire incident to find out the truth, so as to do justice to the deceased and injured and every affected person.

We also think that the Philippine Government must assume its due moral and legal responsibility to offer the deceased and injured and their family members a sincere apology and reasonable compensation. I believe the timely response made by our Government, including the Chief Executive and a number of government officials, and the serious and caring attitude demonstrated by them in the incident have won the public's recognition and appraisal. Although the attempt made by the Chief Executive to contact the Philippine President has aroused disputes, I think this is perfectly understandable as we should not stand

on trifles because people's lives were at stake. On the contrary, I find some unnecessary criticism heartless and unjustified. Most importantly, the Government must spare no efforts in striving to directly take part and intervene in the investigation currently conducted in the Philippines to ensure that the investigation is conducted in an impartial and professional manner and that the truth can be dug out, so as to do justice to the victims. This is very important indeed. I hope the Government can keep up its efforts to demonstrate to us its ability to handle this incident properly and continue to gain the public's support and recognition.

MR ANDREW LEUNG (in Cantonese): President, all the seven million people in Hong Kong are highly concerned and grieved that a tour group from Hong Kong was taken hostage in the Philippines, which resulted in casualties. Among the deceased and the injured, there are friends whom we know. Mr Ken LEUNG was the Vice-Chairman of the Hong Kong Small and Medium Enterprises Association and one of the survivors, Miss LEE Chuen-ying, is a friend of Mr Jeffrey LAM. This incident ended with eight Hong Kong people being killed, four families have lost their beloved ones and three tour group members are seriously injured and still being hospitalized. On behalf of the Economic Synergy, I extend our sincere condolences to the family members of the deceased and injured.

Over the past week, we learnt from members of the tour group about the heroic acts of those who sacrificed themselves to save others. Masa TSE, the tour guide, performed his duties conscientiously and took care of the tour group members until the last moment. Such acts have greatly moved many Hong Kong people and commanded great respect. I hope the injured can have a speedy recovery and Jason, who is still staying in the Intensive Care Unit, can soon regain consciousness, so that he and Mrs LEUNG can together face the future positively. Hong Kong people will give them their full support and walk with them to get out of the shadow of sorrow. We hope the SAR Government will do its best to find out the truth of this incident so as to return justice to the deceased and injured, and provide comprehensive support to them and their family members in the days ahead.

Upon learning the incident, the SAR Government immediately activated the emergency response mechanism and, through China's Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, requested the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines to ensure the safety of the hostages. Moreover, immigration officers and police officers were sent to Manila in the first instance to provide assistance. Unfortunately, the incident still ended in a tragedy. The SAR Government was decisive and promptly arranged a support team, led by an Under Secretary, comprising medical staff, social worker, police and immigration officers, and together with some family members, to fly to Manila for follow-up work. Arrangements were also made for the early repatriation of bodies of the deceased and the return of the injured members of the tour group to Hong Kong, to be under the care of first-class medical officers. At present, we are concerned about the progress of the investigation. The Hong Kong Police have obtained the assistance of the Philippine authorities through the International Criminal Police Organization in collecting evidence and meeting with witnesses, so as to facilitate the completion of the investigation report to be submitted to the Coroner's Court. Hong Kong people have demanded that the Philippine authorities must conduct the investigations in a comprehensive and professional manner. As Leila de LIMA, the Secretary of Justice of the Philippines, has guaranteed, the investigation committee led by her will conduct a comprehensive and fair investigation in accordance with the requirements of local and international laws and give an account of its findings publicly in future. I request that the report must include the sequence of events, details of the entire negotiation process and the causes of the deaths and injuries.

During the live broadcast of the media, we saw many mistakes that should not have been made. The rescue operation as revealed to the world was a complete failure. Being one of the seven million Hong Kong people, I also felt great sorrow. Last Sunday, some 80 000 people in Hong Kong participated in a memorial ceremony to bid farewell to the deceased. We proceeded from Victoria Park to Chater Garden without chanting any slogans, only placards were raised as silent protest. In a calm and rational manner, we urged the Philippine Government to find out the truth as soon as possible.

It is necessary to put in place a contingency mechanism in Hong Kong. In case similar incidents happen in future, the SAR Government has to assume a role and it has to discuss with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs how assistance can be offered in the fastest way possible. Moreover, the Central Authorities will,

through diplomatic channels, exert pressure on the country in question to provide speedy assistance to Hong Kong people.

This incident has also reflected the risks encountered by tour guides, who are front-line staff members of the tourism industry, in the face of emergencies. In future, training on the handling of serious emergencies, such as the methods of handling emergencies and the means of maintaining contact, should be included in the training for tour guides. Miss LEE Chuen-ying, one of the survivors, wrote an article in a newspaper and I quote from it, "Laying the blame on Filipino domestic helpers or the Philippine people, who are innocent, is not the way to console the souls of the deceased. We should have a clear focus and target at the Philippine Government and its police by demanding a fair investigation to be conducted and tracking down the responsible party for this incident. Moreover, support should be given to the injured and the family members of the deceased in making arrangements for their future lives. It is only in this way that the deceased and injured in this incident can truly be cared for. In the long run, we should even support the Philippine people in building a more reliable Government and a society with greater justice. Only by doing so can Hong Kong be truly considered a member of the international community and an international metropolis showing humanitarian care."

President, I so submit.

MRS REGINA IP (in Cantonese): President, the hostage-taking incident in the Philippines has, unfortunately, left eight Hong Kong residents dead and many seriously injured. Like many Hong Kong people, I am deeply saddened and shocked. As I have already made many criticisms against the poor handling of the relevant Philippine authorities, I am not going to make further comments. Certainly, like all other Honourable colleagues, I also hope the survivors will recover and rebuild their lives soon.

President, this incident has unfortunately become a piece of international news, which was even covered by the *TIME* magazine. After reading some overseas press reports, I have a few responses. First, as a number of Honourable colleagues have already pointed out, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) did make a prompt and effective response in

handling this incident by sending a cross-departmental support team headed by the Under Secretary for Security to the Philippines. We could see that they did their utmost to take care of the Hong Kong people concerned, reflected our shock and sorrow, and made every effort to protect the best interests of these Hong Kong people. Besides, the SAR Government also swiftly sought assistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to safeguard our interests. All these efforts merit our commendation.

However, regarding overseas press reports, I would like to raise one point. The very first sentence of the report published in the *TIME* magazine reads, "Because their city is so safe and even-tempered, Hong Kong's residents do not possess the sense of physical danger that many people elsewhere do". Then, it goes on to describe the situation of the Philippines, "Lawlessness is so woven into the fabric of Philippine society that an atrocity like the bloody hostage drama, or even worse, becomes numbingly routine to the point of inertia. Hong Kong, unaccustomed to such violence, is, by contrast, in deep shock". That is to say, President, while being greatly shocked by this incident, people in other countries think that Hong Kong is truly blessed as it has always been a very safe city. These Hong Kong people only travelled abroad for pleasure and they could never have imagined any major disaster like this would happen to them.

Therefore, I would like to relay to the Security Bureau a proposal made by a member of the public. He proposes that the authorities should examine whether it is feasible to upload information on the public order of some priority tourist destinations of Hong Kong people, such as the number of blackmail, hijacking and violence cases in these places, on the homepage of the Security Bureau or disseminate such information through certain means, so that the public can be on the alert. Mr Paul TSE is not in the Chamber. I know this move may have an impact on the outbound travel industry, but I think as Hong Kong people have always been living in a peaceful and orderly society, we should make them aware that this world could be very cruel.

The second point I would like to make is that the Government made prompt responses in the aftermath of the incident that day. As I said at the meeting, apart from the usual practice of activating the support team responsible for providing assistance to Hong Kong people abroad, the Government may also make better use of our Police Force and seek the co-operation of other police forces in the region when similar incidents happen in the future. Foreign

relation matters should certainly be dealt with by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the Hong Kong Police Force are actually part of the INTERPOL, and our law-enforcement agencies also have close contact with their counterparts in many places. Our Special Duties Unit (SDU) receives training on a daily basis, and armies maintained in the course of years are for use in the nick of time, so the saying goes. Perhaps we should have sent the negotiation personnel of our Police Force or the top SDU officers to the place concerned at an earlier time, disregarding whether or not they can participate directly in the hostage rescue operation, in order to give advice and suggestions on various aspects, such as what is the best way to handle the bus hijack. I believe officials of the Security Bureau know better than I do that the day-to-day training of our SDU is on how to deal with situations like this, and compared with sieges of hotels or other facilities, bus hijacks are relatively easy to handle. I hope the Government will give consideration to this.

Finally, like other Honourable colleagues, I urge the Government to make continuous effort to follow up with the incident and provide comprehensive and focused support to the survivors even after the peak of media coverage. The Government should provide long-term support to the children who have lost their parents and to the families which have been shattered, so that they will be able to rebuild their lives soon.

President, I so submit.

MS LI FUNG-YING (in Cantonese): President, the tragedy of Hong Kong people being taken hostages in the Philippines at the end of last month has evoked the emotions of Hong Kong people. We can hardly imagine that the hostage-taking incident, which had a good chance of being resolved without causing any injuries, has ended up in a tragedy. The tour group which joyfully set off for sight-seeing abroad had suddenly plunged into a living hell due to the blunders of bureaucracy, tour members had to face the sadness of parting forever, and a heavy price of eight deaths and seven injuries were paid. This explains why we are so outraged and find it hard to relieve our pain.

The Philippines is a place which is familiar to Hong Kong people yet it is so distant from us. In Hong Kong, among some 200 000 foreign domestic helpers, more than 50% come from the Philippines. This is what we know about

the Philippines; as regards the situation of the country, most of us know very little. This hostage-taking tragedy has given rise to lots of questions: Why were the commands of the rescue operation so confusing? Why did the negotiation with the hostage-taker fail to reach a compromise? Why did they repeatedly miss the chances to subdue the hostage-taker? Why decision was made to launch an attack by people who were not properly geared? There were indeed too many "whys" in our heart. As human lives are involved, the Philippine Government is duty-bound to find out the truth and track down the responsible party, as well as offer compensation to the deceased and injured and their family members.

I hope the Philippine Government can complete the investigation expeditiously and offer reasonable compensation, so as to ease the pain of survivors as far as possible. At this moment, apart from expressing our profound condolences to the deceased, we also hope that our medical staff can provide treatment for the injured wholeheartedly, so as to enable them to recover quickly. As for WONG Cheuk-yiu and her younger brother, WONG Ching-yat, who have lost their parents in the tragedy, I hope they can get appropriate care and lead a healthy life in the days ahead.

President, during the taking of Hong Kong people as hostages in the Philippines, the Chief Executive has called the Philippine President directly, urging the Philippine Government to settle the incident properly. Controversies have been aroused in society on whether this is in compliance with the relevant requirements in the Basic Law. I support the Chief Executive to make this call, for he has expressed directly that this incident is of grave concern to the Hong Kong Government. However, there may be some grey areas at the constitutional level, which is even more sensitive when external affairs are involved. Nevertheless, I think in face of these sudden incidents, our utmost concern is how to settle them effectively. I believe that the Central Government is willing to support the SAR Government and work in line with its requests. And only with the assistance by the Central Government can this incident be settled in a better and effective manner.

With these remarks, President, I support the motion.

DR LAM TAI-FAI (in Cantonese): President, many people believe that as weather is capricious, men are vulnerable to sudden changes in fortune; and that life and death are predestined. However, I suppose those people who joined the tour group and went to Manila happily during the summer holidays could never have imagined or anticipated that on the very last day of their trip, they would be taken hostage for more than 11 hours by a cold-blooded person who had been removed from office as a police officer.

People all over the world could see the Philippine Government's idiotic and ineffectual rescue operation from the "live broadcast of death" on television. We could all see that the Philippine Government's operation was carried out without any strategic preparations, with neither gesture nor efficacy. We could see on television the entire process of how our fellow Hong Kong people faced the threat of death and how they died and sustained injuries in total desperation and helplessness. Such grief and helplessness simply beggars any description.

The tour group members on board the coach were battered by fear, anxieties and hopelessness. Even though we were not among them, we were still very certain that they must be suffering immense grief and pain. The incompetence of the Philippine Government eventually led to the occurrence of the tragedy. Eight innocent Hong Kong people were killed in a foreign country and many others sustained injuries. The situation is so appalling that one can hardly bear the sight of it. Were all the casualties caused by the gunman alone? Or, were people got killed or injured by the exchange of gunshots between the local police and the gunman? Could the tragedy be avoided? What were the causes and effects? Why did the gunman open fire all of sudden? Why did the Philippine authorities fail to grasp any opportunities of subduing the gunman when they delivered meals and water to him and refueled the tourist coach? Worse still, how could they make mistakes when placing the bodies of the deceased into coffins? I am sure that the family members of the deceased and injured, all Hong Kong people and most Filipinos want to know the truth.

President, the Government of the Special Administration Region (SAR) has responded very swiftly to this incident. Immediately after learning the incident, it set up a task force to deal with the incident. It also approached the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong to express our concern to the Philippine police and Government, demanding them to ensure the safety of the hostages.

Immigration and police officers went to Manila to offer assistance, and a flight was chartered to take the family members of the victims back to Hong Kong. The Government's actions in this incident were very decisive and highly efficient. It deserves our commendation.

Having followed the entire process, I must express my appreciation of the performance of the Under Secretary LAI Tung-kwok. He was assigned the task at the most critical moment, and with a support team comprising police and immigration officers, social workers and medical staff, he went to the Philippines to provide assistance. He did his utmost to offer the most effective, comprehensive and personalized assistance to the deceased, the injured and their family members. The Government's efficiency and attitude this time should merit our approval. But speaking of the most pressing task now, I hope that the Government can expeditiously make use of various channels to urge the Philippine Government to release a truthful investigation report.

Hong Kong is a metropolis, and racial harmony is thus a priceless asset of our society. I believe Hong Kong people are sensible and of very high quality. We know very clearly whom we should condemn. We will definitely not develop any hostility or hatred towards the Philippine people. Therefore, the Government does not need to worry too much. Of course, I also hope that the Philippine Government can treasure its relationship with China and Hong Kong and reveal the truth to all as early as possible.

In response to this incident, we in Community 18 have organized a signature campaign in various districts to condemn the Philippine Government's mishandling of the operation. We put up an advertisement in four local newspapers and presented several demands to the Philippine Government:

- offering the highest compensation and an apology to the deceased, the injured and their family members;
- conducting a thorough investigation to uncover the truth and disclosing the investigation report, so as to return justice to the victims; and
- ensuring the personal safety of Hong Kong people in the Philippines.

Like everybody, I will not tolerate any clandestine investigation. Therefore, we must insist on uncovering the truth.

President, people who have erred will often feel lost and go astray, they will try to shirk responsibility and come up with various excuses to gloss over their mistakes. I very much hope that the Philippine Government can use this incident as an opportunity of self-examination. It must not do anything deplorable and stupid in the course of investigation; or else, it will not only hurt the people of Hong Kong, but will also bring shame to the Philippine nationals, and may also arouse the dissatisfaction of the international community.

Apart from wanting to uncover the truth, I also suggest that subject to the consent of the injured and the family members of the deceased, the SAR Government should request the Philippine Government to erect a monument in Rizal Park to mourn the killing of the eight Hong Kong people. This can remind the Philippine Government that the lives of eight innocent people were taken away. It is hoped that the monument can remind the Philippine Government of the importance of avoiding any similar incidents.

Speaking of assistance for the tourism sector, I am of the view that a review must be conducted. The reason is that it was only after the outbreak of the incident that the SAR Government issued a Black Outbound Travel Alert against the Philippines. But from media reports, I know that the Philippines has long since been classified as a high-risk place by countries such as Australia, Japan and Canada. I therefore hope that Hong Kong can formulate a sound outbound travel alert mechanism to enable Hong Kong people to consider their personal safety and remain alert before going overseas.

President, finally, I do not wish to dwell on my grief about this incident any further. I hope that the souls of the deceased can rest in peace and be free from any disturbance. Naturally, I also hope that the survivors and their family members can live on and be strong. This is particularly the case with Mrs LEUNG. I believe she knows that all Hong Kong people are behind her, trying to cheer her up and hoping that Jason can get well soon.

As for WONG Cheuk-yiu and WONG Ching-yat, I hope that you will not give up. You must brace up. You two have become the children of all Hong

Kong people. All Hong Kong people will support you. I hope you can face the future courageously (*The buzzer sounded*)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Dr LAM Tai-fai, time is up.

DR LAM TAI-FAI (in Cantonese): You must grasp the present and embrace the future.

MR CHIM PUI-CHUNG (in Cantonese): President, it was an accident, and a tragedy. Just now, some Honourable colleagues mentioned that the question is about money. In fact, this incident involves eight Hong Kong people (including one tour guide) who were killed and others who were injured. According to press reports (I was not in Hong Kong on the day the incident happened), the gunman demanded 1 million peso (which is equivalent to about HK\$170,000). If there was a possibility of negotiation, why did negotiations not take place? Why could the tour guide not be the representative in such negotiation? Hong Thai should have been the representative in the negotiation. Therefore, insofar as this point is concerned, President, I think this incident is destined and unfortunate, and this outcome is a culmination of many things.

Let us recall the whole incident in a calm manner. We may remember that this gunman or murderer had demanded a compensation of 1 million peso, that is, more than HK\$100,000. If negotiations could be held to talk the matter through, there might be a different ending. But in the end, this tragedy happened.

President, in retrospect, let us analyse this incident. If Members are familiar about the Philippines, they should not consider this incident tragic. In fact, according to worldwide surveys, the Corruption Perceptions Index of the Philippines ranks the 139th among the 100 to 200 regions and countries surveyed. We can see that in the 1950s, that is, about some 60 years ago, the Philippines was among the leading economies in Asia, and after Japan's defeat in World War II, even many Japanese had gone to work in the Philippines. At that time,

the exchange rate between Hong Kong dollar and peso was 1:1. Today, the exchange rate is one Hong Kong dollar to five or six peso, around 5.8 peso. It is quite unimaginable how corrupted the Philippine Government has become.

President, this incident has happened. I personally think that empty talk will not be helpful and we should discuss practical and useful things. In this incident, the swift actions taken by the SAR Government have won praises of the whole world and Hong Kong people. Public opinion surveys also indicated that the Government's popularity rating had increased by almost 10 percentage points. While it is not something considered glorious under the circumstances, it proves that if the Government can deal with things with a people-oriented approach and out of truthful intentions, it can certainly win the appreciation of the people.

President, what can the SAR Government do? The Government must do what should rightfully be done for the deceased and injured. As to whether all these will bear any fruitful outcome, as I said just now, many many other factors are involved.

President, in the meantime, I have to make a small request in relation to the SAR Government's present decision to fly the flags at half-mast. We understand that it is a solemn action for a country or region to fly its flags at half-mast. The SAR Government — I am not saying The deceased in this incident are definitely worth our sympathy, support and remembrance, but the SAR Government must formulate a policy in relation to the flying of flags at half-mast, that is, under what circumstances or in consideration of what contribution made to the Hong Kong SAR will the Government make the decision to fly the flags at half-mast. The intention is to avoid turning this into a political decision by those in authority to appease the people or at the spur of the moment. I personally think that this matter warrants a review.

President, throughout the incident, although we are very dissatisfied with the Philippine Government, there are some 130 000 Filipino domestic helpers working in Hong Kong. Together with other Filipinos staying in Hong Kong for different purposes, the number is believed to be some 180 000. If each of them remits about \$3,000 to the Philippines every month, it will total around \$540 million per month or as much as HK\$6.5 billion (or around 37 billion peso) annually. This figure is the highest amongst various places being hosts to

Filipino domestic helpers. While the Philippines is a very complicated country politically, I strongly believe that if we raise this figure with them, they must respect Hong Kong's wishes.

In this world, everything is but a showdown of power. We see that when the 4 June incident happened in 1989, 1 million people took to the streets. On 1 July 2003, 50 million people took to the streets. This time, as many as 80 000 people have taken to the streets. I particularly have expectations for the younger generation. Instead of being dubbed the City of Protest, Hong Kong must muster its strengths and all of us should stand united to create a better environment for Hong Kong. We must turn this tragedy into our motivation, something we must work emphatically for. We must be united so that nobody can say that we are using this opportunity to become xenophobic, underpinned by a bolt of hysteria. Of course, President, everybody in this world have witnessed our success in these three incidents. May this spirit prevail.

MR CHEUNG KWOK-CHE (in Cantonese): President, the incident which happened in Manila last week involving Hong Kong people being taken hostages finally ended with bloodshed. As the whole tragedy was televised live, Hong Kong was immediately filled with sadness and gloom. I think, in the past week, everyone was filled with grief. In addition, the Filipino Police has been seriously criticized for the numerous mistakes it made in the rescue operation which resulted in the killing of eight innocent Hong Kong people. This makes Hong Kong people filled with anger in addition to sadness.

I wish to call upon Hong Kong people to turn their anger into a positive force because no matter how bad or unprofessional the Filipino Police has handled the incident, we should neither blame the Filipinos nor target those who have settled or work in Hong Kong. As the saying goes, one must bear the consequences of his own acts. We must of course condemn the actions of the gunman, and there are problems with the rescue operation of the Filipino Police as well. Even the words, actions and attitude of the Filipino President after the incident are open to criticisms. But other innocent Filipinos are not guilty and we must not put the blame on them because it will not have any positive effect on the whole thing except for venting our spleens.

It was the beginning of a new school year yesterday. I hope both teachers and school social workers can pay attention to the reaction of the students and the young people to this incident. On the one hand, the teachers and school social workers should look out for cases of young people being heavily disturbed by the incident and help them relieve their emotions. If necessary, counselling advice should be provided or referrals to expert service be made. Moreover, teachers may use this incident as a topic under the subject of Liberal Studies so as to encourage discussion amongst the students on the resulting social phenomena or the current state of international affairs. Nonetheless, I hope the teachers can treat this matter specifically instead of generally, and concentrate more on the opinions of senior students.

Insofar as this incident is concerned, we know that forensic experts have been sent by the Hong Kong Government to the Philippines to collect evidence in an attempt to find out the truth about the incident. But as the investigation was not conducted immediately after the incident, we have no idea of what evidence will be collected and whether there will be discrepancies. Moreover, our experts have no idea of what had happened during the negotiation process between the Philippine Government and the gunman. Therefore, the Hong Kong Government must urge the Philippine Government to make public the investigation report expeditiously so as to give the Hong Kong people who were killed in the incident as well as their families a reasonable reply on, *inter alia*, whether the Filipino Police has mistakenly injured any hostages, whether any injured hostages died as a result of delay in treatment and whether, in the course of the whole incident, anybody involved has been negligent of his duty and should bear responsibility for such.

No matter what the investigation results are, the Hong Kong Government should demand the Philippine Government to offer a public and solemn apology as well as compensation to the deceased and injured and their family members. This is but a small and basic demand that we have.

One slight consolation we have amidst all these sadness is that the Hong Kong Government has clearly acted more efficiently and decisively in the handling of this incident when compared with the previous airport blockade

incident in Thailand. Apart from contacting the Philippine Consulate-General in Hong Kong immediately after the outbreak of the incident, the Hong Kong Government has also requested, through the Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines, that the local authorities should give first priority to the safety of hostages in handling the incident. In addition, police and immigration officers were despatched to the Philippines in no time to assist the Hong Kong tourists.

Apart from commending the Hong Kong Government for its decisive actions, I would also like to thank the team sent by the Government to assist in handling the aftermath of the incident including medical staff, psychologists, social workers and police officers for the efforts they made because it is also very important to console family members of the deceased and injured and heal their traumatic wounds. Looking back, we find that all the hostages including the deceased and injured have displayed a very strong will in coping with the crisis and those survivors have managed to withstand the tough times.

According to the organizers, about 80 000 people took part in the remembrance march last Sunday. I also joined the march. It is a rare but precious scene that various political parties had set aside their differences and come together to join the citizens in remembering those Hong Kong people who had died in that foreign place. The solidarity and compassion of Hong Kong people are plain to see. We are not strangers who live in isolation and do not care about others. I honestly hope that this is not a one-off display of the Hong Kong spirit.

Lastly, I hope those who have died unfortunately in this tragedy can rest in peace and the survivors live on strongly. I wish Jason LEUNG in particular a speedy recovery.

President, I so submit.

MR PAUL TSE (in Cantonese): President, allow me not to repeat the condolences expressed by other Honourable colleagues to the victims and their family members here.

President, it seems we have hitherto only looked at this incident from the security perspective. I notice that thus far, the officials responsible for tourism have not yet made any formal statement. I hope Secretary Rita LAU can comment on the future policy on tourism to let us see what remedies and suggestions she has, so that we can have more opportunities of discussion.

President, allow me to quote a brief report on this incident in the latest issue of the *Time* magazine. I am also grateful to Mrs Regina IP for talking just now about the matters to which members of the Hong Kong public should pay attention when travelling overseas in future. I think the *Time* magazine is very precise. Hong Kong people are used to living in a very safe environment and Hong Kong is a very benign city, so this incident really came as a great shock to Hong Kong people. In fact, the world is becoming increasingly dangerous, be it in terms of natural disasters or man-made calamities, so we must pay greater attention to the attitude that should be adopted by us when travelling outside Hong Kong, including the choice of destination and the preventive, contingency and remedial measures. I believe the tourism industry will also collaborate with the Government as far as possible in formulating the relevant policies and measures, so that in the future, the public can take psychological and physical precautions in this regard.

President, allow me to voice some reservations here. Quite a number of Honourable colleagues and even some people in charge of travelling agencies have voiced their agreement with using the black outbound travel alert system as a means of sanction to force the authorities in the Philippines to fully co-operate with us in investigation and with not cancelling the alert before the authorities there have completed their investigation report. On this point, I can make it clear from the outset that it is certainly not for the sake of protecting the interests of the tourism industry that I voice the following views. I simply believe that even if we I also agree very much with issuing the appropriate alert or advisory to the Hong Kong public to tell them that it is not advisable for them to travel to the Philippines for the time being. However, if we use the outbound travel alert system, in particular, the black travel alert as a means of punishing a certain country for its handling of an incident, I think a rather big question mark hovers here.

As we all know, there is a set of objective criteria for issuing the outbound travel alert, including the nature and duration of the threat and whether it is

targeted at travellers. At present, no other country is placed under the black outbound travel alert. We must raise one question: Are such places as Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran not more dangerous than the Philippines? Why did we not issue any black outbound travel alert against them? It seems that in dealing with such matters, we are inconsistent or due to the fact that we are too focused on a particular incident, we have responded immediately without considering the integrity, consistency and rationality of the whole system. Is there any contradiction or inconsistency here? I believe that in the long run, if we hope that this system can be more efficient and better accepted by the public, and that there is an open and transparent mechanism for assessment, it is not advisable for us to issue the alert as a form of sanction. I agree that there is a need for the Government to express our dissatisfaction to some extent. Many Honourable colleagues or members of the mass media have pointed out that in this incident, be it the measures taken before, in the course of or after this incident, there were many inadequacies that fell short of the standards of Hong Kong people or professional standards. I fully agree with this. However, I still hold that we must apply the black outbound travel alert carefully.

I wish to point out in particular that some clauses in insurance policies designed to help people but may end up doing a disservice. In the event that a black outbound travel alert is issued, if some people need to travel overseas to do business or, as in our case, to make visits to the prisons in the Philippines and go where we know full well there are dangers, the clauses in some travel insurance policies often put us at a disadvantage. For example, in this incident involving a tour group of the Hong Thai Travel Services Limited, there is a clause in the insurance policies taken out by a lot of the people in the tour group saying that if one exposes oneself to unnecessary danger, one will be excluded from the coverage of the insurance policy. What actually does this mean? I believe this will give rise to a lot of disputes. As we all know, if such a clause is set down in an insurance policy, often, this may result in a problem, that is, when something happens, particularly in the event of a serious incident, ultimately, follow-up actions may have to be taken on whether or not the people concerned are covered by the insurance policy. Fortunately, this time around, the insurance company concerned did not pose any obstacles, but this point really warrants our attention. We also notice that the relevant insurance policies also state that such places as Afghanistan, Cuba, Congo, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria, and so on, are not covered. However, none of all these countries is placed under our black alert for

the time being. I believe that in the long run, we must deal with such an inconsistent practice carefully.

President, finally, I wish to say that since deaths have occurred, of course, we feel very sad but what is even more important is whether or not at present, there are any Hong Kong residents — Hong Kong residents who are alive — still suffering from injustice in this particular country. I wish to mention in particular the incident relating to Mr CHEUNG Tai-on. Mr CHEUNG Tai-on and two other Hong Kong residents have been detained in the Philippines for over a decade, but their trial has not yet been concluded. No matter if they have done what they are accused of or not, according to our standards, it is totally unacceptable that no judgment has been delivered despite the passage of a decade. I hope that the Security Bureau can discharge its responsibility in this regard by taking care of all Hong Kong residents in the Philippines or other places, and when they are subjected to unfair treatment, assistance can be offered to them.

Thank you, President.

MS CYD HO (in Cantonese): In this hostage-taking tragedy, eight Hong Kong people were killed, leaving behind three broken families. Here, I hope that the deceased can rest in peace, and I hope all the more that the survivors can come to terms with this bravely.

Almost the whole process of how the hostages were killed was televised live and Hong Kong people witnessed how a corrupt and incompetent police force could be such a bane to the ordinary masses. With globalization, not only are ordinary members of the public in the Philippines subjected to its scourge every day, even Hong Kong people visiting that place for a short time are also subjected to its scourge. In fact, the murderer on this occasion was not a terrorist on an organized mission, and he was not linked to the Abu Sayyaf Group in the southern Philippines. He was only a sacked police officer. Comparatively speaking, this hostage-taking incident could have been resolved through negotiations or a small-scale armed operation. However, it turned out that this incident ended with the death of hostages, thus leaving Hong Kong people who watched the live broadcast feeling extremely puzzled and outraged. President, in fact, this incident can be examined at four levels. The first is of course investigation. Why did a hostage-taking incident which, relatively

speaking, should not be difficult to resolve end in tragedy? Here, I fully support the SAR Government in sending officers to take part in the investigation and the collection of evidence, so as to do justice to the victims.

Second, we must provide adequate support to the family members of the victims and the injured. In particular, we must help the injured until they have fully recovered.

Third, we must prevent the spread of xenophobia in Hong Kong. President, recently, an SMS spreading a false piece of news was making its rounds among groups of Filipino maids, saying that domestic helpers were attacked in a certain district and causing panic in these groups. Even social workers providing support to them also received this kind of false SMS. Last week, I took the MTR train and at that time, it was not very crowded in the cabin. When a Filipino maid carrying many personal items saw that I had no seat, she apprehensively insisted on offering her seat to me. That was really lamentable because in our society, various ethnic groups should get along with each other peacefully and trust one another. However, the present social atmosphere has made some Filipinos feel insecure about their personal safety. If this kind of sentiment continues to spread, this will not be favourable to social harmony at all. Therefore, I implore those members of the public who are outraged by this tragedy to bear in mind that they must by no means turn against the weak. I also urge the authorities to be impartial and adopt objective economic data as the basis in reviewing the pay for foreign domestic helpers. They must by no means exploit the grief and anger of Hong Kong people over this unfortunate and unjust incident and use it as the tool to oppress foreign domestic helpers.

Lastly, President, we must learn a lesson from this incident and put in place a contingency mechanism for Hong Kong people in distress overseas. On the day of the incident, the Chief Executive, Mr Donald TSANG, called the President of the Philippines but his call was not answered immediately. In fact, in order to protect the safety of Hong Kong citizens, the Chief Executive was duty-bound to call the President of the Philippines and doing so was within his ambit. However, after this matter was disclosed, a controversy has arisen over whether or not the Hong Kong Government knows anything about diplomatic protocols and whether it has act *ultra vires*. This issue has even developed into a personal attack on a young academic, which is most regrettable indeed. Here, I am grateful to Prof Simon SHEN Xu-hui for voicing the view of sub-sovereignty in

support of the Chief Executive in taking the initiative to contact overseas heads of state direct in case of emergency. As I said just now, I think this is the duty of the Chief Executive. Regarding the lack of an immediate response from the authorities in the Philippines, in fact, this precisely shows that the SAR Government should discuss with the governments of neighbouring regions as quickly as possible to establish a contingency protocol.

In fact, Article 151 of the Basic Law stipulates clearly that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region may on its own, using the name "Hong Kong, China", maintain and develop relations and conclude and implement agreements with foreign states and regions and relevant international organizations in the appropriate fields, including the economic, trade, financial and monetary, shipping, communications, tourism, cultural and sports fields. In fact, Article 157 in Chapter VII of the Basic Law also stipulates clearly Hong Kong's scope, power and responsibility in external affairs. Apart from Chapter VII of the Basic Law, which gives us the scope in this regard, Hong Kong, together with the Philippines and other Asia-Pacific regions, are actually members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and all its members enjoy equal status. We have concluded the agreement on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters with the Philippines and Hong Kong also takes part in long-term international police co-operation. The protocol in international co-operation and such external affairs have actually existed for a long time and they show that Hong Kong has the scope to be more proactive in activating certain procedures and mechanisms in times of emergency to ensure the safety of Hong Kong residents in distress outside Hong Kong.

For this reason, I hope that various sectors must by no means impose self-regulation due to the sensitivity of the word "sub-sovereignty" and be deterred from developing our external affairs and relationships. In fact, the Chief Executive is now visiting Russia and yesterday, he met with President Dmitry MEDVEDEV. In the past, Mr TUNG Chee-hwa also met with the President CHIRAC of France. Therefore, that these external affairs can be categorized as sub-sovereignty is actually long-established. President, in fact, the tragedy on this occasion is not specific to any country or race, only that good-natured and innocent people were victimized in a society devoid of justice. I hope that this time, apart from showing the victims and their family members infinite care and concern, Hong Kong people should also gain a better and deeper

understanding of the subject of external affairs and globalization. Thank you, President.

MR VINCENT FANG (in Cantonese): President, a Hong Kong tour group was held hostage by a gunman in Manila, resulting in an unfortunate incident in which eight people were killed and three other seriously injured. Since the incident was televised live on that day, most Hong Kong people felt as though they had witnessed it first-hand. Therefore, this incident grieved us very much. Last Sunday, with a temperature of over 30°C and under the blazing sun, 80 000 Hong Kong people observed silence in Victoria Park. I believe they have expressed the heartfelt feelings of Hong Kong people in general. For this reason, I absolutely support the four demands made in today's motion and just now, Ms Miriam LAU has also voiced the position of the Liberal Party.

It is imperative to demand that the Government of the Philippines give an account of the truth of this incident to the deceased and the injured. However, the reality is that deaths have occurred and, as Mrs LEUNG asked Dr FONG to say on her behalf yesterday, all of us must get to our feet again bravely and resume our normal lives. Therefore, I hope that this tragedy is only an individual incident that would not lead to racial hatred or internal political struggles in the Philippines.

There are over 200 000 Filipino maids in Hong Kong and in fact, they are also victims of the feebleness of this country called the Philippines. It is due to the economic gloom of the country that they have to work in other places. After the tragedy, there are indeed individual cases of dismissal or non-renewal of contracts, but I believe the circumstances are unique and normal. Regarding the criticisms levelled at the incumbent President of the Philippines, AQUINO III, I believe they are already enough and I hope we will understand that he had only taken office for two months when this incident happened. Instead, I hope that this incident can give the present administration there greater justification to fight corruption and boost its law-and-order capabilities.

I personally believe that a more important task is for Hong Kong to examine how to deal with the aftermath and what lessons we have learnt from this incident.

First, this incident has made us see the importance of a clean and highly efficient government, elite disciplined forces and well-trained medical officers. The reactions of our SAR Government, in particular, the actions of the police force, contrast sharply with and are arguably far superior to those of the police in the Philippines. In fact, all these cannot be taken for granted. It is because Hong Kong has for decades enforced the policy of offering high pay to civil servants to ensure clean government that the present-day corruption-free and highly efficient Government can be fostered.

However, concerning the governance of our Government and the actions of our disciplined forces, in recent years, there have been a lot of criticisms. In particular, in respect of the Police Force, due to the increase in the number of rallies, protests and confrontations and the excessive advocacy of the importance of human rights, a great deal of pressure has been exerted on the Police Force. Therefore, I wish to take this opportunity to commend the disciplined forces in Hong Kong. Your quality and performance are the great pride of Hong Kong people. I hope the Government will continue to attach importance to the equipment and training of the disciplined forces, so that Hong Kong can preserve such a pride and the public can live here with peace of mind.

Second, that Hong Kong could become aware of a Hong Kong tour group being held hostage in Manila so quickly was solely due to the quick wit and courage of the tour group leader, Masa TSE. Here, I salute him. However, this incident also reflects the fact that Hong Kong people, having lived in an environment of better law and order for a long period of time, may not understand the law and order situation in some countries, for example, the proliferation of arms, the undesirable law and order situation, and so on, in many countries. In view of this, I hope the tourism industry can provide training to leaders of outbound tour groups, including briefings on the political and law and order situations in overseas countries as well as training in emergency response and handling.

Lastly, I wish to thank members of the mass media covering this tragedy because with your professionalism, you covered the unfolding of the entire tragedy in an extremely dangerous situation and when reporting on the aftermath, you showed respect for the family members of the deceased and the injured by refraining from pestering them to gather news. However, it can be seen from the news reports that the situation at the scene was quite dangerous. Hong Kong reporters have little experience of reporting news in combat zones and in view of

the deaths and injuries suffered by international reporters in the riots of some countries, I hope that the Hong Kong police can provide to the mass media some training in self-protection.

This incident has caused not just the loss of eight lives, but also a number of broken families. I sincerely hope that the Government can provide appropriate long-term support to them, and I hope all the more that the survivors can continue to live courageously in the future.

I so submit. Thank you, President.

MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG (in Cantonese): President, due to the failures of the Philippine Government and its police, the hostage-taking incident in the Philippines has ended up in a tragedy with eight deaths and seven injuries. Hong Kong people, just like taken on a roller-coaster ride, were deeply shocked, provoked and saddened at witnessing the entire process of rescue on television. Even today, we are still greatly frustrated, and we strongly demand the Philippine Government to allow experts from the SAR Government to take part in the investigation into the incident, so as to come up with an impartial, independent, professional and comprehensive report. Moreover, it should offer us an apology and compensation, so as to do justice to the deceased and injured as well as people in Hong Kong.

Last Sunday, 80 000 Hong Kong people took part in the procession organized by various parties and groupings in the Legislative Council. Seemingly, those dressed in black wished to express their sorrows; those dressed in white urged for vindicating injustice; and those with yellow ribbons strongly requested an independent, impartial, professional and comprehensive investigation. They all remained silent during the procession, without shouting any slogans. But this does in no way mean that Hong Kong people will allow the Philippine Government to shirk its responsibilities and give up seeking justice for the deceased and injured. We hope that the SAR Government can keep the Black Outbound Travel Alert for the Philippines in force, as the Philippine Government failed to endeavour to ensure the safety of Hong Kong people in the hostage-taking incident. We are greatly dissatisfied with the futile and hasty behaviour of the Philippine Government. Given that we are bound to have bad feelings if we visit the Philippines, we had better refrain from going there for the

time being. Moreover, we also hope that the Central Government can support the SAR Government and stop its people from visiting the Philippines, pending production of an independent, impartial, professional and comprehensive investigation report by the Philippine Government.

Hong Kong people and the education sector are very concerned about the four students involved in the hostage-taking incident in the Philippines, including LEUNG Chung-hok, Jason and LEUNG Chung-yi, Jessie from the HKMA David LI Kwok Po College. Unfortunately, Jessie LEUNG was killed in the tragedy whilst Jason LEUNG is still in a critical condition because of brain injury. All people in Hong Kong are worried about his condition and health. We hope that with the assistance of his attending doctor, he can tide over this hardest time in his life and live with his mother in the days ahead. Also, with toughness and courage, he can convey all wishes and blessings from Hong Kong people and the education sector on him to his heroic father and siblings.

Regarding the other two students, WONG Cheuk-yiu and WONG Ching-yat, who have lost their parents in the tragedy, although they are still on leave, the principal, teachers and schoolmates of the Tsuen Wan Government Secondary School have taken special care of them. Some classmates have jotted down notes and prepared photocopies for them. Moreover, 15 of their close friends are learning how to conduct emotional counselling, with a view to applying such skills to help them when they go back to school. They have demonstrated their utmost sincerity and efforts to assist them in tiding over this hard time. In fact, the efforts made by the principal, teachers and schoolmates can serve as a very good lesson on civic education, showing all of us that there is all this sympathy among Hong Kong people and assistance from the school behind the tragedy. This has demonstrated the unity and love among Hong Kong people, which is also a success of our education.

After all, Hong Kong people should let go of the tragedy and should in no way be immersed in sorrows forever. Mrs LEUNG, the most pitiful one in the tragedy, made a tough and calm response yesterday to thank Hong Kong people for their care and blessings. She said that she did not wish to see us shed tears for her family anymore. She even encouraged us to be brave and get back to our normal life. Her words also apply to the concern expressed by Hong Kong people and the media to the injured and those students involved in the tragedy. I hope that after expressing our sorrows and blessings in the wake of the tragedy,

we should provide room for them to learn in a peaceful environment. With the deaths of their family members in the tragedy, they have already been very saddened, and their living and studies may also be substantially changed and affected in future. Therefore, it is utterly important for us to ease their pains by providing them with a warm and caring environment without any interference as far as possible. According to my understanding, the Education Bureau and the Social Welfare Department will work with schools to provide them with appropriate care, hoping that they can lead a normal life again with the silent support in society.

From this hostage-taking tragedy, we have witnessed the incompetence and dereliction of duty on the part of the Philippine Government. However, it is attributed to the fault of the Philippine Government rather than that of its people. Over the past week, the grievances and dissatisfaction of Hong Kong people were only focused on the Philippine Government. We merely requested it to conduct an independent and impartial investigation, and offer us an apology and compensation in case there was any fault on its part. We do understand that we should in no way project our grievances onto those Filipinos living in Hong Kong. As a matter of fact, the 80 000 Hong Kong people participating in the procession held last Sunday did not do so. On the contrary, acquitted themselves most respectably even in face of such a tragedy. Besides, some Filipinos also took part in the gathering in Central on that day. As we can see, in face of such a cruel and fatuous massacre, both Chinese people and Filipinos share the same sorrows and pains. We are all human beings with kindness, humanity and mercy, irrespective of nationality.

With these remarks, President, I support the motion. I would like to express my grief for the deceased and extend my condolences to the survivors, hoping that they can lead their lives courageously. Hong Kong and every one of us will always stand by them.

MR LEUNG YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): President, at our age, we must have had personal experience of parting with the living and bidding farewell to the dead. However, a tragedy occurred suddenly with multiple causalities is another story. Therefore, I think we can understand why the public have such great grievances and strong reactions towards the hostage-taking incident in the Philippines this time.

Over the past week or so, we have expressed all our griefs and angers. And now, I wish to reiterate that after all, we have to think about the areas which warrant our deep thoughts and consideration in this tragedy.

Regarding this hostage-taking tragedy, honestly, I still fail to ease my pains even now. Eight innocent Hong Kong people were killed and a number of happy families were broken. We, being outsiders, can hardly imagine the difficulties faced by the survivors in these families. There is such a line in a recent film on earthquake, "It's gone, and we only come to know what it means by then!" However, President, apart from expressing my great pains, I can also find the glory of human beings among those killed. In my opinion, it is worthwhile to sing praises of them in our discussion today.

I think all people in Hong Kong should pay high tributes to a number of the deceased in this hostage-taking incident.

The first one is the heroic tour escort, TSE Ting-chunn, Masa. As recalled by all tour members, he was very responsible. Not only did he call back secretly to Hong Kong to report the incident in a calm manner, he also kept on taking care of the tour members bravely during the entire hostage-taking incident. But very unfortunately, he was killed at the end, for his work. His travel agency will hold a memorial gathering for him tonight. I think it advisable for the public to attend it, for we can express our grief for this hero who had shown dedication and commendable professionalism in his job.

It is really worthwhile for all people in Hong Kong to remember this tour escort. In fact, like us, he is just an ordinary member of the public. I think he had never imagined that he would face such a hostage-taking incident in working as a tour escort. But ridiculously, the glory of human beings is, very often, demonstrated in times of emergency. Therefore, it is absolutely advisable for us to sing praises of and remember him.

The second one whom I admire very much is Mrs LEUNG. She has witnessed the deaths of her husband and two daughters on the coach, whilst her only son is still struggling hard for survival in the intensive care unit. Nonetheless, Mrs LEUNG has demonstrated her tough and positive side in front

of us, making a statement to encourage Hong Kong people that we should no longer shed tears for her family but should lead a normal life bravely.

Regarding the statement made by Mrs LEUNG, I believe everyone in Hong Kong should understand that, despite the transient nature of things in the world, there is love among us. I think Hong Kong people will not only continue to show our concern to her family, but also express our gratitude for her encouragement.

The third one I wish to name is LEE Ying-chuen, one of the survivors who wrote an article in newspapers to recount the whole incident to us a few days ago. We are very impressed as she has revealed the truth to Hong Kong people in such an orderly manner. Moreover, she has also told us how incompetent the Philippine Government and its police were at that time, as well as their faults in handling this incident. Even so, she has made it very clear that the occurrence of this incident is attributed to the institutions of the Philippine Government rather than its people. We should cherish our relationship with its people and should never project our bad feelings onto Filipino domestic helpers.

In fact, the hostage-taking tragedy this time is absolutely not an individual incident as mentioned by the spokesman of the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines a few days ago. From the entire process of dealing with this hostage-taking incident, we can see that the tragedy could absolutely have been averted. It is indeed attributed to the uncivilized and unhealthy political system in the Philippines.

Recently, as reported through various channels, not only people in Hong Kong but also those in the Philippines are very dissatisfied with the way of handling this incident by its President, government and police. For this reason, we note that the media in the Philippines has kept on revealing how perfunctory and incompetent the authorities are in dealing with this crisis. Such information can enable not only us but also its people to get the full picture of the story, who can then voice the demand to reform their political system. I think we should support them to do so.

President, with such an uncivilized government and a political system devoid of justice, not only will its people be affected, the interests of people living in other countries or regions will also be jeopardized. Therefore, insofar

as human rights and justice are concerned, there is no national boundary at all. The tragedy this time can further enable us to realize that it is vital to enhance protection of human rights in the international community.

President, after expressing our sorrows and grievances, I hope we can find out the truth and push the international community to make efforts to strive for the goal of achieving justice, peace and equality. President, I so submit.

MR IP KWOK-HIM (in Cantonese): President, at the time of the hostage-taking incident in the Philippines, I was attending the meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in Beijing. The entire incident was televised on Channel Nine of the China Central Television. People in Hong Kong could also witness how our compatriots were killed in Manila through local television channels. People in the Mainland also shared our great pains and grievances. Moreover, the national flag of the Office of the Government of the HKSAR in Beijing, being located in the West City, was flown at half-mast to express condolences over the deceased. Many local passers-by in Beijing also stopped there and heaved a sigh.

The gunman in the hostage-taking incident had no intention to kill anyone at the very beginning. He simply requested a reinstatement. In fact, this was a sound basis for negotiation, giving them a high chance to settle the incident. However, it ended up in a fatal tragedy with heavy casualties. The result of the incident was utterly illogical, fused with a lot of doubts. Eight Hong Kong citizens were killed for no reasons. The SAR Government should make every effort to find out the truth and seek justice for the deceased. So long as there is evidence to show that the authorities in the Philippines should be held responsible for the failures in the rescue operation, the SAR Government should do its utmost and demand them to offer a public apology and compensation to the family members of the deceased and the injured. A Councillor of the National Diet of Japan has said, "It is immoral to offer compensation without any apology, and it is hypocritical to offer apology without any compensation." We demand the Philippine authorities to offer us not only an apology but also compensation. Both of these two requirements must be met.

Hong Kong people have never been the target of terrorist attacks. However, very often, victims in many terrorist activities are killed for no reasons as they appear mistakenly in a wrong place and at a wrong time. The tragedy of Hong Kong tourists being killed in the Philippines this time is obviously incidental. Given that Hong Kong people will travel overseas more frequently, the SAR Government should learn a painful lesson from this incident and formulate a contingency mechanism. In case of similar incidents in future, it can make responses more effectively.

In 2008, the Chinese Government formulated a contingency mechanism to deal with outbound travel emergencies for mainlanders. I highly recommend the SAR Government to make reference to it. The content of this contingency mechanism, broadly speaking, is that according to the location, nature, scale and impact of the incident, the Chinese Government will issue four emergency responses in view of its seriousness. The first one is "extremely serious", which will be handled by a command headquarter of outbound travel emergencies established under the State Council. The second and third ones are "serious" and "fairly serious", which will be handled by an emergency task force established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Tourism Administration. The fourth one is "general", which will be handled by the National Tourism Administration itself.

The SAR Government can make reference to this classification system and formulate a contingency mechanism to deal with outbound travel emergencies for Hong Kong residents. As for incidents which are relatively minor and within the scope its purview, the SAR Government can handle them itself. But regarding some incidents which are relatively or extremely serious and outside the scope of its purview, it can handle them via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or an even higher level. On the other hand, the SAR Government can also consider enhancing the functions of its Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices, so that the latter can offer assistance to Hong Kong people who are involved in incidents overseas as far as practicable.

The incident this time has highlighted the restrictions on the role of the SAR Government in handling external affairs. Therefore, some people have put forth the concept of "sub-sovereignty" recently. I also heard that some Members mention it just now, thinking that the SAR Government should seek authorization from the Central Authorities to handle external affairs which cannot otherwise be

handled as they are out of the scope of its purview. I do not subscribe to such a view. It is because Hong Kong, being a special administrative region of China, has "sub-sovereignty" to speak of at all. According to the Basic Law, Hong Kong only has the authority to handle external affairs but not that to handle diplomatic affairs. Regarding the authority to handle external affairs, it is stipulated clearly in the Basic Law that the Central Government shall authorize its regional government to engage in co-operation and exchanges with foreign countries in respect of economics, scientific technologies, culture, sports and external trade. The authority to handle diplomatic affairs is of a political nature. It should be exercised by the sovereign state, representing its interest. According to the Constitution of our nation, the authority to handle diplomatic affairs should be exercised by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and the State Council. Our State has stipulated clearly the structure to exercise such powers and we should in no way cause it to be blurred. In fact, our State has a powerful and experienced team of staff to handle diplomatic affairs. In case there is any serious matter involving external affairs, it should be handled via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I think it more effective to handle such matter in this way, rather than allowing Hong Kong to handle it in its capacity as a special administrative region.

With these remarks, President, I support the motion.

DR JOSEPH LEE (in Cantonese): President, the tactics adopted by the Philippine Government in handling the Manila hostage-taking incident were neither sensible nor appropriate. Obviously, the incident has not only showcased the incompetence and ignorance of the Philippine Government but also called into question its respect for life. I believe a responsible government must respect human life and should not have dealt with this incident so haphazardly. Certainly, there is recently a speculation that, for some reasons, the Philippine police was worried that the Government might combat corruption and had thus intentionally adopted a lax approach in handling this incident to teach the new Government a lesson. Should this be the case, the politics and internal struggles involved are only the business of the Philippines, and we have no intention of making any irresponsible remarks on them. But it is absolutely unacceptable if it means hurting the innocent, in particular, overseas tourists. It should be borne in mind that the Philippines are a country while Hong Kong is a place. When Hong Kong people visit the Philippines, the Philippine

Government has a duty to ensure the safety of these overseas tourists. For this reason, I believe the Philippines should definitely be held fully accountable for the loss of innocent lives and casualties in this incident. I believe that while all of us are outraged by this incident, the SAR Government has a duty to urge the Philippine Government, through various channels or even appropriate diplomatic means, to give a full account of the incident in a fair, just and open manner and do justice to the Hong Kong victims.

Now, we are all saying that the primary tasks are preparing the investigation report, conducting autopsies, collecting evidence, and so on, hoping that the truth will be uncovered soon, but we should not forget the victims, both the survivors and the diseased. Apart from expressing our deepest condolences and grief, we should also note one thing, which is that we should give an account of the incident in the report as soon as possible. For the survivors, we should provide assistance to the injured so that they can recover soon. These are our tasks at hand. However, we should bear in mind that the survivors have a long way to go in life. How should we support them? I hope the SAR Government does not attach importance to this incident only in a short-lived manner, claiming that much has already been done. What should be the next steps to take in the 10, 20 or 30 years to come? This should be dealt with very carefully.

Among the survivors, there is a nurse, Mrs FU TSANG Yee-lai, who is one of our colleagues. She saved a child and left the bus with her two children, yet she witnessed the death of her husband. What should she do after returning to Hong Kong? Certainly, we have already done a lot for her. We could see that she displayed the noble virtues of a nurse — relieving the wounded and rescuing lives — and she did so with great courage and succeeded in saving some people. It would certainly be a good thing to commend or reward her for this, but how should we support her in the future? This is vitally important. I hope the SAR Government will set up a special task force to carry out long-term follow-up actions in respect of the daily living of and other support for the survivors and give an account of the support for them to the Legislative Council annually, so that they will be able to stand up and continue with their normal lives. Certainly, public money will be used for this purpose. As public money should be put to sensible use, we do not hope to provide support and assistance to them in an impulsive and reckless manner. In the long run, however, I believe Hong Kong people are prepared to share this burden and agree to deploying an

appropriate amount of public money to provide long-term support to the survivors. After all, no one would hope that such an unfortunate incident would happen.

Therefore, I very much hope the SAR Government will consider this proposal and give an account to the Legislative Council on a regular basis, so that we will be able to have a clear picture of their progress every year and know whether they manage to lead a relatively normal and healthy life. Thank you, President.

MS AUDREY EU (in Cantonese): President, the incident involving a group of Hong Kong tourists being taken as hostages in Manila on 23 August has resulted in eight deaths and injuries to seven persons. President, on behalf of the Civic Party, I express our deepest condolences over the deceased and heartfelt sympathy to the injured and the victims' families.

President, the hearts of the people of Hong Kong were touched by this incident not only because we could witness almost the entire incident on television, but also because we saw that the Manila police was badly equipped and lack of planning, and their whole operation played a major part in leading to the eventual occurrence of the tragedy. The gunman MENDOZA was constantly provoked during the rescue operation, or throughout the process we saw on television that lasted more than one hour.

President, after the incident, I read from the news reports the conversations between two members of the media in Manila and MENDOZA during the last hour of the stand-off, that is, around six to seven o'clock. I noticed that MENDOZA had issued almost 10 warnings to the Manila police within an hour or so. However, what we saw was that the Manila police kept provoking MENDOZA without paying any attention to the warnings. Even when the driver had the opportunity to talk and told the media that they were watching the television, the police failed to realize that what was shown on television could provoke MENDOZA.

In addition, not only did we see the reactions of the Philippine President after the incident, we also saw how the incident was handled by the Philippine authorities afterwards — the coach was even turned into a tourist attraction.

Many people were seen smiling while posing for photographs in front of the coach, and no proper arrangements were made. Moreover, the media in Manila was seen being allowed to film the deceased in the coffins. These incidents have infuriated Hong Kong people. Hence, President, besides calling on the SAR Government to participate in the final, full investigation, I have also written to the Chief Executive. In the meeting of the Panel on Security earlier, I also requested the SAR Government to demand the Manila Government to make a formal apology and erect a memorial plaque at the scene of the incident to commemorate the incident and remind our descendants how similar incidents, should they occur, can be handled properly.

President, I trust that the Government will provide care to the family members of the victims and the injured in various aspects. I have also seen relevant funeral arrangements being made, and probably appropriate commendation, and so on. I believe the Government will definitely consider all this. In addition, I trust that the Government will follow up the provision of care in education, health and other areas. I think Members from various parties and groupings will follow up these matters as well.

President, I would also like to discuss in particular the dispute mentioned by Mr IP Kwok-him in his speech delivered on behalf of the DAB, concerning sub-sovereignty. He said that there is no such thing as sub-sovereignty, because sovereignty is sovereignty. President, I believe this is not simply a dispute over terminology; rather, we are concerned what can be done promptly if similar incidents unfortunately occur in the future. This is because I know that the Chief Executive had made a telephone call to the Philippine President during this hostage-taking incident, which lasted for 11 hours. I also know that support was rendered in the diplomatic aspect. But still, we should review if anything else can be done after the incident. We have also seen a lot of disputes going on in newspapers and on the Internet. Concerning the question of whether the Chief Executive's decision to make the telephone call was correct, I would like to indicate clearly, on behalf of the Civic Party, that we strongly support the Chief Executive making the telephone call.

Nevertheless, it is even more important to clarify one point. If similar incidents unfortunately recur, what can the SAR do promptly? For instance, insofar as the police authorities of the two places are concerned, can any mutual arrangements be made promptly between the Hong Kong Police Force and the

Philippine police? Can the Security Bureau make such arrangements with the Philippine authorities? We learnt from the Philippine news reports after the incident that, in addition to the Special Action Force, a so-called "Super S.W.A.T." team could actually be deployed on that day. However, the latter was not deployed probably due to the arrangements made at that time or their internal conflicts. Had Hong Kong authorities been allowed to intervene earlier, would it be possible for the negotiators from Hong Kong or the experts from the Hong Kong Police Force to have done a better job of handling counter-terrorist or hostage-taking incidents? Would it be possible for assistance to be given?

President, I hope the SAR Government can deliberate and discuss with the Central Authorities to explore if anything else can be done at the international level, because besides feeling distressed, we in Hong Kong know that these incidents do not happen only to Hong Kong people. In fact, we notice that a similar incident happened in Manila the day before, and similar incidents have also happened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil as well as Russia. There was also frequent occurrence of this type of incident in other places. What should we do? I have seen some discussions alleging that it was not right to make the telephone call, or the terminology of sub-sovereignty is incorrect. However, this is a matter of life and death. I think that authorization can be given beforehand or afterwards. I hope the SAR Government can discuss with the Central Authorities to sort out what can be done at the international level, so as to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents in the future.

MS EMILY LAU (in Cantonese): President, I speak in support of Ms Miriam LAU's motion.

First of all, I would like to express my profound condolences over the deceased and extend my deepest sympathy to their families. May I wish the injured a speedy recovery, and that, as Mrs LEUNG said yesterday, everyone will resume their normal life.

President, the incident is not only a grave concern to Hong Kong people, but it has also caused a great stir in the international community. Therefore, I very much hope that the Manila Government will handle the incident with great caution. There are remarks about Hong Kong being biased towards the Manila Government, but that is not the point at issue. President, the concern is that so

many Hong Kong people were killed and injured in the incident, and that the way they handled the incident, as seen on the television, was improper. Hence, I earnestly hope that the Hong Kong authorities will take part in the investigation. Just as I said at the meeting of the Panel on Security last Thursday, President, if we are not allowed to investigate — the Philippine authorities now say that upon the arrival of the Hong Kong team in the Philippines, the local police will assist the team in gathering evidence. However, if the conclusion of the report compiled by the Hong Kong Government in future differs vastly from that of the report of Manila, I believe it will cause a furore in Hong Kong, President, which we do not wish to see.

The question is that we are worried whether the investigation by the Manila Government will be conducted in a genuinely impartial, fair, accurate and credible manner. It is disclosed in today's newspapers that even the coffins of the deceased have been wrongly named. This has stirred up a controversy in the international community, thinking that the wrong corpses have been shipped to Hong Kong. We look at every development with keen interest. What they have done has contributed to the loss of confidence.

President, I understand that sovereignty is a very sensitive issue. However, if you have sovereignty — as a matter of fact, from our studies on international relations, we know what the ultimate authority is. That is, you can go to the extent of giving up your own sovereignty. Therefore, if I am a sovereign state, it is fine as long as I allow you to do so. I am referring here to Central Government. But we of course need to find out whether the Manila Government is prepared to accede to it. It is good that several Directors of Bureaux are now in this Chamber. As rightly put by several Members earlier, many Hong Kong people frequently travel abroad nowadays for work or leisure, so we expect that when they run into trouble in other places, the SAR authorities will be able to help them escape from such plights expeditiously.

During the process, the Central Authorities have certainly rendered assistance, but as we suggested at the meeting with Secretary Ambrose LEE on Tuesday, can further actions be taken? After the incident, the SAR Government made a call to Beijing immediately. It also called Manila and some personnel flew to the scene at once. In such case, why was it necessary to call President AQUINOS at 4 pm? If so many actions had been taken, were there areas where the co-operation between Hong Kong and Beijing was required? Or could Hong

Kong do more? I think that the authorities are duty-bound to explain how the discussion with the Central Authorities can be improved under the current situation.

Of course, President, many people consider that the authorities have done a good job this time around, and the Government's popularity rating has risen, as indicated by public opinion polls. It is evident that Hong Kong people are very fair. If they think that the Government has performed well, the popularity rating of the Government will rise. But over a long period of time, this rating has been dropping. Therefore, I hope that the authorities do not only perform well in this incident, but also in other aspects. The SAR Government should know clearly that members of the public are fair. If the Government can answer the aspirations of the public, it will receive commendation. However, on issues relating to democracy or people's livelihood, the Government's popularity rating has all along been on the decline.

I hope that the Government will learn a lesson from this incident and do its level best in other areas. I believe that in the debate of the Legislative Council today, Members will fully support the SAR authorities, but the question is that this may not be feasible. Some members of the public have wondered what would happen if those on the coach were not Chinese. President, we should refrain from making meaningless speculations. However, we hope that the SAR or China can convey a clear message to the international community, that if anything happens to Chinese people, someone will be held liable, and the consequences will be grave.

Many colleagues have said earlier that the incident has made us see that life is precious, which is right. However, President, you and I are aware that this is not the case in many places in Asia, where human lives are relatively valueless. The good performance this time is evident that the lives of people are precious, and that rule of law and human rights are precious, too: We do not act recklessly, and we need a thorough investigation into all matters. Therefore, I was surprised at Ms Miriam LAU's earlier remark about the Philippines having indicated that a report would be submitted in 10 days. While the Hong Kong Police are still gathering evidence, and it is said that the investigation will take a month to complete, the Manila Government said that a report would be submitted in 10 days. We can see who is acting hastily and who is working stringently. This is very crucial to the credibility of the investigation, and whether it can

restore the confidence of Hong Kong people, Filipinos and the international community in Manila.

I very much hope that the debate today can convey a very clear message to the Manila authorities, and I also hope that the SAR authorities will act forcefully in conveying this message, in anticipation of a credible, independent and impartial report. Otherwise, it will bring endless troubles.

I so submit.

MISS TANYA CHAN (in Cantonese): President, I have been sitting in this Chamber all along listening to the speeches of Members, and my heart has been sinking deeper and deeper. I believe we should have been slightly pacified, but this discussion has brought back to our mind many episodes of the incident, and our hearts have become increasingly heavy as a result.

I believe many Members in this Chamber had been watching the live coverage on television that night. Members aside, I trust all Hong Kong people were also watching the live television coverage. I can clearly recall that when the television station was almost prepared to suspend the live coverage for the resumption of normal broadcast, there came suddenly the sound of six gunshots, and we saw the tour bus driver running out shortly afterwards. We saw on television the subtitles displayed by the Philippine television station. There were three English words on the screen, but I could not read the last word all along. I do not know whether it was because I had blurred vision or because my eyesight was impaired as I dared not believe the fact. I could not read the last English word even though it had taken me a lot of time. But, the Chinese subtitles said that all the hostages were killed. I remember clearly that the reporter began to lose her composure, voice quivering as she tried to repeat the Chinese version of the English subtitles — we were all shocked, feeling nervous and upset. Most infuriatingly, we saw those policemen inching back and forth near the coach and striking the bus for a while with a sledgehammer, and it was even tossed into the coach at one juncture. Of course, as citizens, we do not expect to see the stunning Hollywood scene of nailing the assailant in one clean shot. However, we saw how clumsy the policemen behaved in the rescue attempt, and we found that they had bitterly lost so many opportunities during the course. Actually, members of the public in Hong Kong were all infuriated at the

chaotic deployment and outdated equipment they used. Nonetheless, I also asked myself, and some Honourable colleagues have also spoken of this earlier Last Friday, while having a meal, I was flipping through a copy of the *Time* magazine, and I could not hold my tears on reading a report about the Hong Thai coach incident. At that moment, I started pondering these questions after reading the article: Have Hong Kong people been living in a safe place for too long, such that their alertness has been dulled? I believe that before night fell on that day, no one would have thought that those killings could really happen. Anyhow, we are gravely concerned that an incompetent government and its policemen in whom Hong Kong people have completely lost confidence will carry out investigations to find out the truth. Apart from the bereaved families, all Hong Kong people and even the whole world should know the truth. So, I hope the Government will definitely and proactively strive to find out the truth that should be made known to everyone.

According to the afternoon news report earlier, two police officers who had been sent to the Philippines to investigate the incident were detained by the Philippine Government before boarding the flight home, and we were really ablaze with anger. The authorities were suspecting that the police officers had taken away some exhibits. But it was later discovered that the bullet shells found in their luggage were samples only and not exhibits gathered from the scene. The Philippine Government had already completed gathering evidence, and yet, they thought they had missed out some steps in their work when they learnt that we had found some bullet shells during the gathering of evidence. I think we can hardly have confidence in the work done by the whole Philippine Government. In any event, I hope the SAR Government will make its best endeavour to find out the truth. Ten days have passed since the occurrence of the incident, and I believe it is now time for its precipitation in our hearts. Besides mourning and expressing indignation, we should set our eyes afar and ponder on the inspirations that we can draw from this incident.

Actually, the credibility of the Philippine Government has gone bankrupt with President Benigno AQUINO III's smiles and the SWAT team's incompetence. However, anger and dissatisfaction aside, we should deal with this incident carefully, and we should never allow our grief and anger to transform into extreme nationalism. My office has received some phone calls, saying that the black travel alert should be maintained for three years, and some have even asked that we should stop employing Filipino maids forever. We

hope to seize every opportunity to explain matters to members of the public. Last Sunday, the Civic Party specifically organized a signature campaign to mourn the victims of the incident at places where Filipinos usually meet. We were all in tears when individual Filipinos said to us: "I am sorry.". Many Filipinos also feel very distressed. I believe that, before they came to work here, they and their family members must have been having a rough time in the Philippines all along, given an incompetent government and the corrupt police. So I believe Hong Kong people should show more understanding and sympathy for the pains suffered by them.

This incident has demonstrated the brilliance of human nature, for example, the responsible tour leader, and Mr LEUNG who attempted to subdue the gunman. On the day of the march, Hong Kong people mourned the deceased together, irrespective of class and race. Hong Kong people are very benign and accommodating, and I hope we can continue to support one another and tide over the difficult times.

Some Honourable colleagues have earlier discussed the issue of black travel alert. After this incident, I think we need to reconsider or revisit the level of risk of some places. Actually, Hong Kong people are not the real target in this incident. All along, the Philippines may not have been a safe place, and our alertness may have also been rather relaxed. For this reason, we need to seek a re-examination of the list of countries covered by the Outbound Travel Alert System.

I believe Hong Kong people will never forget the shocking glimpses and scenes seen over the past 10 days. This incident has indeed had an impact on me. Now, I will think of the heartrending scenes whenever I see a coach. I hope members of the public, particularly the injured and the families of the deceased, would continue to move on together and support one another. Thank you, President.

MR CHAN KIN-POR (in Cantonese): President, in the evening of 23 August, just like the general public, I witnessed a heartbreaking scene in front of the television. The Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) squad of the Philippines used some very primitive means to storm a hijacked tourist coach in an attempt to free the hostages on board. There was also news that all the hostages were killed. At that time, I believe members of the public, like myself, were in mixed

emotions. We were agitated, saddened and enraged. At last, the gunman was shot dead, but eight Hong Kong residents were also killed.

Although the culprit was killed, many questions remained unanswered; and these questions were probably related to the direct cause of the tragedy. Why had the Philippine Government not conducted the negotiation properly? Had the Philippine police not considered that the arrest of the gunman's brother might incite the gunman and cause the killings? Why had the Philippine Government not deployed elite troops to rescue the hostages? Were Hong Kong residents killed because of delays in rescue efforts after they had been wounded by gunfire? As the Chief Executive said, we must pursue to the bitter end to do justice to the deceased.

I understand how Hong Kong citizens would feel when they see their fellow citizens killed in the Philippines, but I have to remind everyone to keep calm and not to indiscriminately target the Filipinos just because of our anger. We have to pursue the culprits of the case and the cause of casualties, not the people of the Philippines. If we continue to hate each other blindly, it will only lead to more tragedies.

There were voices in the community saying that the Government should have been more actively involved in the incident. In fact, the SAR Government and the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines did quite well in dealing with this incident. I understand that staff of the Chinese Embassy reached the scene shortly after the incident; they had carried out co-ordination and liaison work, while officials of the SAR Government rushed to the scene soon afterwards to deal with the aftermath. We should bear in mind that the Philippines is a sovereign state and many things have to be dealt with through diplomatic channels, hence we cannot intervene if we feel like it. Even so, the remedial work has been carried out smoothly, and the Chief Executive and government officials have shown that they have done their best. Currently, forensic experts of the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) have arrived in the Philippines to collect on-site evidence, and the bodies of the eight Hong Kong people killed in the incident have been shipped back to Hong Kong. The Government would conduct further post-mortem examinations to ascertain the cause of death. In addition, with the statements of survivors, I believe the HKPF should be able to collect sufficient evidence to urge the Philippine authorities to give a true and faithful account of the whole incident.

In this incident, the insurance company had responded speedily by sending a team of two doctors and three supporting staff to the Philippines. Two medical airplanes were also despatched to pick up and bring seriously injured Hong Kong residents YIK Siu-ling and Jason LEUNG back to Hong Kong respectively, so as to enable them to receive better medical care. In addition, the insurance company has increased the compensation of the personal accident travel insurance taken out by group members of the tour group from HK\$500,000 to HK\$1 million. This flexible approach commands our commendation.

In this case, once again we have seen the gem of humanity. According to some preliminary information, when the gunman intended to shoot and kill those sitting near the front part of the coach, several men attempted to throw themselves at the gunman to stop the killing, including Ken LEUNG who tried to protect his family. Jason LEUNG's younger sister, Jessie LEUNG, was reportedly killed by the gunman when she risked her own life to dash forward and check the condition of her injured brother. In addition, when Mrs LEUNG saw her husband fell, she had once wished to follow his footsteps and die, but when she thought that no one would take care of their children if she was killed, she held herself back from the pain of bereavement and told herself to stay strong and survive the trauma. When I saw this on the TV, my wife and I could not help but cry.

I sincerely hope that Jason LEUNG will have a speedy recovery from the injuries, and I believe Mr Ken LEUNG and his two daughters, who are now in heaven, must be glad to learn that they can hang on. In addition, the tour leader, Masa TSE, who is also a victim of the incident, sacrificed his life while performing his duties loyally in his final moment. All these people still showed the noblest qualities of human beings even in the face of death. This has won our profound respect and admiration for them.

Lastly, I have to cheer up other survivors of the incident, and I also hope that they can face the future bravely. The people of Hong Kong will always support them.

I so submit.

MR JAMES TO (in Cantonese): President, I am not going to repeat the remarks given by other Honourable colleagues already.

First of all, I have recently read a report, asking how we can find out the truth. About the investigations conducted by the HKPF in the Philippines, the report said that the HKPF had told the media that they needed to pose questions to the witnesses in the Philippines through the Philippine police. President, I find this unacceptable. According to an international agreement on mutual assistance in criminal matters, there are currently two cases under investigation. According to an order issued by the Coroner, the HKPF are investigating the case in which eight Hong Kong people were killed abroad. The Philippine police or the five-member panel formed by order of the Philippine President and chaired by the head of the Department of Justice in the Philippines are now investigating the case involving eight Hong Kong tourists killed in Manila.

In the course of investigation of the case by the HKPF, the HKPF only need pose questions to the witnesses in the Philippines in the presence of the Philippine police, and the questions do not need to be posed through the Philippine police. Similarly, when the Philippine police question the surviving witnesses in Hong Kong, they do not need to pose questions through the HKPF, and they only need to do so in the presence of the HKPF. Thus, I hope the Government will clarify whether we have encountered any obstacles in this connection, or whether some information has been disseminated in an unclear manner.

President, secondly, a five-member panel has currently been formed in the Philippines by order of the Philippine President, and it is chaired by the head of the Department of Justice in the Philippines; its members include the head of the Department of Interior and Local Government, a member of the media association, a member of the lawyers' association and a representative of Chinese people. Besides, the Chairman of a Chinese group against violence, Teresita Ang-See, has also been appointed a member, thus, there is a total of five members. According to what Teresita Ang-See told a Philippine newspaper, *Oriental Morning Post*, it is initially planned to complete all investigation procedures within three weeks and the result will then be announced. According to its Chairman, the head of the Department of Justice, the panel may do the following: first, invite the Philippine President to make clarifications and provide

the relevant information; second, invite some recognized experts to provide assistance in finding out if the Philippine police and the Philippine Government have made any blunders, including any blunders in the course of negotiations.

President, as the five-member panel is now conducting investigations, one of my suggestions is that the family members concerned or the Government can consider striving for a meeting with this five-member panel and propose, for the record, comprehensive and three-dimensional questions that we can think of. We may pose, say 100, questions, irrespective of whether the final report can answer all these questions, including some very particular questions or certain facts for this will help us exert pressure. Anyway, we may in doing so also obtain relatively fair, reasonable and convincing results. As to whether questions may be posed to the five-member panel, the panel certainly has the right to make the final decision.

Second, the Secretary for Security has said that the Coroner's Court in Hong Kong can conduct a death inquest. Certainly, the Coroner's Court has the right to determine whether it will do so. However, if the Coroner's Court really conducts a death inquest and hopes that various parties will be treated according to more reasonable and fairer procedures, it means that all witnesses involved in the whole incident that happened in Manila, the Philippines, are not just going to provide evidence in writing, they will also have to come to Hong Kong for cross-examination by the Coroner and the legal representatives of the family members concerned. I really hope that this could be done one day, but I am really sceptical about that day coming.

If the Coroner in Hong Kong really orders that a death inquest be conducted, I hope the Government and the Central Government will make the best efforts to exert pressure so that all the witnesses I just mentioned, probably including all the relevant SWAT members in the Philippines, all those who provided support services, the Coroner, the Mayor and Vice Mayor, the tourist coach driver, those who delivered box meals and the local tour guide will come to Hong Kong for cross-examination by the Coroner and the legal representatives of the family members concerned. In this way, a more convincing judgment may be delivered under the Hong Kong system.

According to my preliminary understanding, the five-member panel appointed by the Philippine President will conduct the cross-examination, and the

family members concerned or their legal representatives do not have the right to conduct the cross-examination, so the panel should take the initiative to find out the truth. In case the Coroner's Court in Hong Kong really conducts a death inquest, when we compare it to the five-member panel from the Philippines, it goes without saying which side will draw a more convincing conclusion.

President, I simply want to say that the Philippine Congress will conduct a separate investigation. My preliminary understanding is that some Congressmen in the Philippines seem to opine that, if the family members concerned in Hong Kong or some Hong Kong people wish to suggest questions so as to enable the Philippine Congress to question the Philippine Government in a more comprehensive and three-dimensional manner, as well as look into the responsibilities of the Philippine Government and the whole course of the incident, they really hope that the family members concerned in Hong Kong, the Government or other people in possession of information can suggest the questions to them. The Democratic Party will very proactively carry out liaison work in this connection.

Lastly, I do not think there is any problem for the Chief Executive, Donald TSANG, to have made a direct call to the Philippine President. I feel indignant about some raising queries about this procedure under such circumstances.

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): President, for every person in Hong Kong, there is nothing special about each passing day — including 23 August. It is a day near the end of the summer holidays, and it is also approaching the end of the peak travel season for Hong Kong people. Many people would like to take this last opportunity in summer to relax and get away from the busy life. Even for our children and the students, they would also want to travel and broaden their horizons. Such a plain day in August is a good reflection of how Hong Kong people lead their lives.

But this plain day in August turned into a shocking nightmare for some. Twenty-one Hong Kong people spent that day as if they were in hell. The outcome at the close of the day was a horrible bloodbath. Eight lives were lost. Gone were the things they experienced in life — the laughter and the tears. All were shattered and crumbled into ashes at a single moment in time. The tragedy came all of a sudden and it is hard for us to take in, let alone comprehend. That

day, many people in Hong Kong wept. They breathed a sigh at the transience and absurdity of life.

On the morning of that day, a Philippine policeman who had been sacked took some Hong Kong tourists as hostages. They were held in the coach. The man bargained with the authorities and hoped to clear himself of the accusations made against him. As the incident was televised live, the people of Hong Kong were taken by great surprise, for they live in a peaceful society where political turmoil is unheard of. At first the gunman talked with the negotiators and he even released some old and frail hostages. The police there were optimistic. It was a bit odd to see things seem to be quite relaxed and we thought that the event would come to a peaceful conclusion.

As evening came, things took a swift turn. The gunman who looked calm until then became cold-blooded. Rounds of bullets were fired. We were horrified, worried about the Hong Kong people held as hostages. Then the driver of the coach escaped. He said that all the hostages were killed. At that moment, Hong Kong people who were glued to the TV were all shocked. They wanted to do a lot of things but they could not. They hoped fervently that this was not true. And they waited desperately for a miracle.

But they saw that the police in the Philippines were taking things easy. There was no sense of urgency. The action to storm the coach came as a farcical attempt filled with blunders and gross ineptitude. We could stand it no more and we asked how could it be that way. But all we could do was to wait in front of the TV, wait for something more to be done, a miracle to appear. In the end, it was confirmed that the gunman was shot and so were some Hong Kong people. As the hostages were rescued or brought out on stretchers, we still hoped that they were still alive and they were only injured. We hoped against hope for a miracle. At last, we knew that eight innocent Hong Kong people were killed. We were all grief-stricken and many wept.

Surely the bloodbath has ended. But the grief and mourning are here to stay. And so are many questions left unanswered.

The Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) and I condemn this act of atrocity and the slaughter of innocent people.

It is a heinous crime. We are sorry about the ugly and evil side of human nature, that a man could have done such crime for a selfish cause and to clear his name. The gunman put the lives of the hostages at stake and in the end, he died with the eight persons he had killed. This is a cruel act to end other people's lives. Families were bereaved of their loved ones. We cannot take in such a tragedy. The people of Hong Kong detest violence. They dislike violence to repay violence and an eye for an eye. We are lovers of peace. We vow to fight for justice and see justice to be done. But we do that in a calm and peaceful way. This is our answer to acts of violence. We will never condone them.

Last Sunday, thousands of people took to the streets to show their grief and condemned violence in a silent and peaceful manner. This is again proof of reason and peace which Hong Kong people treasure so much. We detest the coldblooded acts of the gunman. But we will never do the same to the Filipinos. We only target the heinous crime committed by the gunman and the disappointing way in which the local authorities handled the case.

The ADPL demands that a thorough investigation be conducted into the tragedy as to how it has happened and how inept the local authorities have handled the case. We demand that people who have made blunders in this case be held responsible. Now that the tragedy has taken place for more than a week and there are many different versions of the story, some seem to be true while others are not. As we are perplexed by these conflicting accounts, we demand that the Hong Kong Government should make a formal request to the Philippine authorities for a full-scale investigation into the incident and compilation of a report of the investigation which meets professional standards. We do not want any perfunctory apology. We hope that the Hong Kong Police Force can step in and secure full co-operation from their counterparts in the Philippines. This will enable the truth to be uncovered. President, we can never wait for a miracle to come out of this. We do not need a miracle. All we want are facts.

The ADPL hopes that the authorities can make these questions clear. First, the tactics used by the Philippine Government in the hostage incident and the planning it had, and what it did to meet our request that the safety of the hostages be given top priority. Second, the negotiations that took place between the local police and the gunman; and the reasons for the Philippine Government not acceding to the gunman's demands in an attempt to secure the release of the

hostages. Third, the reasons which made the gunman lose his senses and whether this has anything to do with police tactics and other acts which provoked him. Fourth, the reasons for the failure to storm into the coach and save the hostages despite having raided the bus for a long time.

President, I would like to mention two names. First, Mr LEUNG Kam-wing. I think he was very brave. He jumped at the gunman and tried to stop him. That shows his great love for his family. Also, I would like to name Mr TSE Ting-chunn, Masa. He was the tour leader, smart enough to call his Hong Kong office and report the incident. He was willing to be handcuffed at the front part of the coach. He once made the following remark and this is often quoted by his friends. It is: we can lose everything, but not the spirit to fight on; we can have nothing, but not confidence; and everything may get old, but we must never allow our hearts to grow old. Masa, you have surely done it.

MR CHAN KAM-LAM (in Cantonese): President, 23 August was a heartrending day to the people of Hong Kong. Eight precious lives were lost in this unfortunate incident, which has brought inconsolable grief to a number of families. No words can express our sorrow. The ineptness of the Philippine police made us tremble with anger. At the sight of the clumsy rescue operation of the Philippine police, the people of Hong Kong were filled with grief and indignation. I believe, like me, all the people of Hong Kong will demand an investigation of the incident to find out the truth and do justice to the deceased and the injured. Hence, I implore the SAR Government to actively strive for the greatest extent of direct participation in the investigation to expeditiously find out the truth. In the past few days, the Hong Kong police investigation team had been gathering evidence on the coach, but this is only the first stage of work. We believe they will encounter many difficulties in the investigation and examination work to follow, and we hope that officers of the Hong Kong police team will persevere with it.

For one week in the past, everyone in Hong Kong has been carrying a heavy heart because of the hostage incident happened in the Philippines. The incident showcased the corruptness and ineptness of the Philippine Government. The public cannot be blamed for their hatred against the Philippine Government. However, it has been some time since the happening of the incident, and I hope

we can think over the issues with a calm and objective attitude. The Philippines has all along been in a friendly relationship with China, and close trade relations have been established. There is a large number of Chinese nationals living in the Philippines, and many of them are relatives of Hong Kong people. In Hong Kong, more than 100 000 Filipinos are working here as domestic workers. In other words, some 100 000 families are living together with Filipinos day in and day out. These links cannot be severed overnight.

Truly, in the past few decades, the Philippines has been burdened by its political instability, economic recession, collusion between the Government and the business sector and rampant corruption and bribery, where its people can hardly earn a living and an enormous number of Filipino are forced to work overseas to make a living. Over the years, fishermen of Hong Kong or China have been robbed and detained by Filipino pirates. The people of Hong Kong all along have a rather negative impression about the Philippines. I would say that the long-standing problems have brought the country to a critical state, where "democracy" alone cannot serve as a remedy to all these problems.

The hostage incident has rightly revealed the various weaknesses of the Philippines, stirring up the deep-seated dissatisfaction and anger of the people of Hong Kong towards the Philippine Government. Apart from the urge for making every effort to save and treat the injured and find out the truth of the incident, some radicals suggested boycotting travel to the Philippines and dismissing Filipino domestic workers. I fully understand the emotions of some members of the public. However, the problems encountered by a country in the course of development are complicated and diversified. Radical actions will do no good to the development of the Philippines, but will affect instead the relationship between Hong Kong and the Philippines. The incident has obviously stirred up a hornet's nest. Governments of various countries have expressed concern about the incident, while media around the world has condemned it. All of these have imposed enormous pressure on the Philippines. I hope that the Philippine Government will learn a lesson from this painful experience and carry out reform, making every effort to implement people-based policies. I also believe that Hong Kong is a harmonious and civilized society, and that the people of Hong Kong are reasonable and understanding, who will treat the some 200 000 Filipino nationals living and working in Hong Kong kindly.

On the other hand, the Hong Kong Government should be commended for its swift actions taken in this incident. In the outbreak of the incident, the Government promptly contacted the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of the Philippines for assistance. It made the strong request that the safety of Hong Kong tourists should be deemed the overriding concern. The Government immediately sent three officers from the Immigration Department and an officer from the Hong Kong Police Force to the Philippines to provide assistance. When the unfortunate events happened, the SAR Government promptly arranged for a chartered flight on the night of 23 August to take relatives of the deceased and the injured and a supporting team to Manila to help the victims. Upon the arrival of the injured at Hong Kong, it arranged the best treatment for them promptly. Throughout the incident, the Government managed to keep the public informed of the latest development of the incident and the actions to be taken by the SAR Government in a timely manner. I will say that the overall performance of the Government in the incident has won the trust and commendation of the public.

This incident has brought deep grief to us, but the unity of the people of Hong Kong is also manifested. When I marched with 80 000 Hong Kong people, I saw the people of Hong Kong pouring their blessings to the families of the victims. I can feel the never-ending love and care, and the spirit of helping each other. I believe, at this time of grief and indignation, if we can go hand in hand and heart to heart to support each other, together we will walk through the dark valley and rise to the challenges of future bravely, and we definitely can overcome every crisis.

President, I so submit.

MS STARRY LEE (in Cantonese): President, first of all, may the deceased rest in peace. And I wish the injured a speedy recovery. May the people of Hong Kong disturbed by the incident have peace of mind soon and resume their normal life.

A happy trip to the Philippines has turned out to be a tragedy costing the lives of eight Hong Kong people, resulting in the permanent separation of the

deceased from their families and leaving four families broken. In these days, the people of Hong Kong have been keeping a close watch on the development of the incident.

In the past few days, all of us have kept a keen interest in the condition of the three injured victims, namely LEUNG Chung-hok, YIK Siu-ling and CHAN Kwok-chu. Yesterday, when we learnt that their condition had improved slightly, we felt a bit relieved. We hope that they can face this incident bravely and take a positive attitude in the days to come.

Last week, like many people in Hong Kong, I watched the entire rescue on television live. Really, the incident has brought grief and anger. We saw the delay of the Philippine police in carrying out the rescue operation, and the failure of the snipers to grab several golden opportunities to nail the gunman and put an end to the incident. We saw that the negotiators simply lacked training, the police were poorly equipped and the SWAT team just performed disastrously. All these have cost the lives of the innocent hostages.

After the tragedy, we learnt from the newspaper or information provided by other survivors to the media that when the gunman knew of the arrest of his brother and that the negotiator was lying to him, he was provoked and started killing the hostages. All of these were unacceptable to the people of Hong Kong indeed. For all along Hong Kong people had hoped or expected that the Philippine Government would deal with the incident according to the standard of Hong Kong or that of developed countries, or even according to the international standard. But regrettably, we can in no way see from the entire rescue operation that it is an efficient government. What we see is a government that looks to be strong but is actually weak under its skin. We only see that the police and the SWAT team are incapable of handling the incident.

Recently, during a chat with some friends well versed in the situation in the Philippines, I was told me that their government was only up to this standard, and that Hong Kong people were viewing the incident with their own yardstick. I have discussed the incident with the Filipino domestic helper in my home. She pointed out that the police there only knew how to bully the civilians and take bribes, and she did not know what else they could do. Upon hearing those remarks and seeing the incident, many Hong Kong people and I will feel that happiness and good things before us should not be taken for granted. In Hong

Kong, we have a highly efficient police force and a corruption-free government. Society as a whole cherishes lives. We must treasure these. However, Hong Kong people really need to sharpen their sense of crisis, for there is no guarantee of happiness and good things. Crises do not only happen overseas. But when we are overseas, we should particularly raise our alertness.

After expressing my feelings, I would like to make a few points. Many colleagues mentioned earlier that in respect of the investigation of the incident, Hong Kong people requested and anticipated that the Government could strive for the greatest room and the greatest extent of participation. Though direct participation may not be possible in the course due to the influence of certain factors, we must compile a report from the bits and pieces of information and evidence we found. The Philippine Government will submit a report to Hong Kong later, but I have utterly no confidence in that report. The people of Hong Kong hope that with the report of the SAR Government, we may query the content of the report submitted by the Philippine Government in future, so as to reconstruct the course of the entire incident.

Moreover, I would like to talk about the treatment of the injured victims. The SAR Government has by all means provided the best treatment to the injured victims. It is reported in today's newspaper that the Central Authorities will consider allowing doctors ranked at national treasure level to come to Hong Kong to treat LEUNG Chung-hok. Indeed, the SAR Government and even we Members should seek the assistance of the Central Authorities in allowing doctors ranked at national treasure level to come to Hong Kong to provide treatment to LEUNG Chung-hok, for we believe an integrated treatment of Chinese and western medicines will be helpful to his recovery.

Next I would turn to the role played by the Security Bureau. The people of Hong Kong love travelling. Many Hong Kong people are visiting different places at different times. However, in the event of a crisis in the course of a guided tour, or when we are overseas, we lack a high alertness to danger or knowledge of dealing with crises. We do not even know clearly the law and order situation of the place we are going to visit, still less places to seek help in case of distress. After this incident, I believe Hong Kong people will be more conscious about this. But I hope that the Security Bureau or the SAR Government will provide detailed information on popular tourist sites, so that travel agents and the public can make in-depth study before their departures.

For the law and order situation of the places to be visited is after all a matter of concern. Moreover, the public should consider the efficiency of the local governments before embarking on their journeys.

Finally, I would like to call on the people of Hong Kong vent our anger and dissatisfaction against the Philippine Government on the many Filipino domestic workers working arduously in Hong Kong. In fact, many families in Hong Kong will not be able to function normally without them. We believe the majority of the people of Hong Kong are reasonable and understanding, and we will not vent our anger and dissatisfaction on the Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong.

President, I so submit.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE (in Cantonese): President, I would like to thank the 25 Members for their remarks and their care and condolences extended to the bereaved families. I will focus my response on the second point of the motion, that is, the support provided to these families by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) in the aftermath.

The tragedy involving the hijack of a Hong Thai tour to Manila in the Philippines has caused irreparable consequences and profound sorrow to a number of families in Hong Kong. Even though some people managed to survive the incident, they have suffered from serious injuries or endured great trauma, both physically and psychologically. The SAR Government will definitely exert its utmost to provide continued and comprehensive support to these families until they do not need it.

In the wake of the tragedy on 23 August, the SAR Government launched immediate support actions on all fronts. In the small hours of 24 August, the authorities promptly arranged charter flights for the Under Secretary for Security,

staff of the Immigration Department and some relatives of the victims to fly to Manila to provide assistance to the Hong Kong people and their families in distress. The Hospital Authority (HA) medical team mobilized by the Food and Health Bureau, consisting of two Chiefs of Service, Accident and Emergency (A&E), two A&E nurses and two clinical psychologists, as well as an experienced social worker and two clinical psychologists from the Social Welfare Department (SWD) were also on board.

The medical team went to the relevant local hospitals to visit the people injured in the incident, assess their injuries and provide them with medical support. It also provided counselling to the injured and other members of the tour group. On 25 August, the HA deployed a neurosurgeon and an advance practice nurse to Manila to support the clinical management of Jason LEUNG, who suffered from serious brain injury in the incident, and offer professional advice to his mother, Mrs LEUNG.

Besides, staff of the SWD also provided emotional support and counselling to the injured and other tour members, assessed their welfare needs and provided timely support to them, in addition to making necessary preparations for arrangements required upon their return to Hong Kong. This support team accompanied the victims and their relatives all the time in Manila and paid close attention to their conditions in order to stand ready to provide the necessary support.

The day after the tragedy, that is, on 24 August, SWD staff promptly contacted relatives of the deceased and the injured and sent designated social workers to gain a thorough understanding of their situations in order to provide them with emotional support and follow up their other welfare needs, which included providing child care services and emergency financial assistance to them. On the evening of 25 August, relatives of the victims returned to Hong Kong from Manila with the caskets of the dead. The Chief Secretary for Administration, the Secretary for Security, the Secretary for Home Affairs, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development and I received them at the airport. The SWD also sent 23 designated social workers to accompany the relatives there. From that moment onwards, more than one social worker from the Integrated Family Service Centres has been deployed to follow up the case of each family in distress and provide support to them in all aspects of their living. These social workers will also provide in-depth counselling to the families when

necessary so that they will be relieved from worries about trivialities and recover from grief soon.

As for the three seriously injured tour members, Mr Joe CHAN and Ms YIK Siu-ling have been admitted to the Prince of Wales Hospital for treatment; and Jason, who suffered from brain injury, returned to Hong Kong with his mother, Mrs LEUNG, on 26 August under the care of the HA Overseas Medical Support Team and is now receiving further treatment in Tuen Mun Hospital. They are still in hospital and have shown signs of improvement, which has given us some peace of mind. Medical social workers of the SWD and clinical psychologists of the HA will continue to follow up their cases in the hospital. Most importantly, the HA professional team has all along been closely monitoring their conditions and will make every effort to provide them with comprehensive medical care and follow-up services to help them recover both physically and psychologically.

On 26 August, I accompanied the Chief Executive to visit the children of the WONG's family, Tracy and Jason, who lost their parents in the incident, to offer them our condolences and encouragement. They are now taken care of by their paternal uncle and aunt and their family members love them very much, so we do not have to worry about them. Later, I will visit the other families which are ready for our visit one after another to comfort them and evaluate their needs.

Mr and Mrs LI Yick-biu, who were released unharmed, are very thankful, yet they join the other distressed members of the tour group in grief and sorrow. Mrs FU Cheuk-yan, who behaved most quick-wittedly, is emotionally more stable now and is very concerned about the situation of Ching-yat, the child she brought along with her when she left the bus that day. As for the parents of Mr Masa TSE, the tour guide who displayed great composure and dedication to his duties, while being in tremendous grief, they are very proud of him.

In the evening that day, Mrs LEUNG returned to Hong Kong with Jason on a medical charter flight. The Acting Secretary for Food and Health, the Chairman of the HA and I greeted them at the airport and offered our condolences to this great mother, Mrs LEUNG, who, as everyone knows, has been very strong and calm. During the past few days, the accountability team, including the Chief Executive and his wife, the Chief Secretary for Administration, the Secretary for Food and Health and I, visited the injured in hospital one after another.

Regarding financial assistance, upon gaining contact with the relatives of the deceased and the injured, the SWD promptly provided emergency grants to individual families in need to alleviate their immediate financial hardship. Many organizations have announced, one after another, that they would provide financial assistance to these families through the SWD. These organizations include the Hong Kong Jockey Club, the Community Chest of Hong Kong, Lok Sin Tong, the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce and Po Leung Kuk. Besides, many people in Hong Kong and overseas have made enquiries with the SWD about donation arrangements. In response, the SWD has already helped these organizations/individuals contact and forward their donations to the victims and their relatives after confirming their wish to receive such donations.

On burial arrangements, the Chief Executive indicated earlier that the authorities could arrange for the permanent burial of the deceased in Tribute Garden if the bereaved families so wish. The relevant departments will also make every effort to extend assistance to them in burial and funeral arrangements.

This tragedy has caused profound psychological trauma to the victims and their families, and some affected families have also suddenly lost their breadwinners. Apart from providing these families with immediate assistance, we also have to look after their long-term welfare needs. The social workers of the SWD will continue to follow up their situations closely and provide them with the necessary support in a continued and focused manner. Should the victims and their families have any long-term financial needs, the authorities will definitely provide proper support and make appropriate arrangements.

We are particularly concerned about the long-term welfare arrangements for the two children in the WONG's family. The SWD will continue to follow up their case to make the best arrangements for them. To meet their urgent housing need, the Housing Department has already allocated to them a unit in the same block of the public housing estate in which their paternal uncle and aunt are living to alleviate their problem in accommodation.

On education, the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (TWGHs) has set up a specific fund, the TWGHs "Love Our Children" Education Fund, for the families in distress. The Fund will be used to meet the education expenses of the children in these families until they finish tertiary education to encourage them to study hard and take a positive outlook on life. The TWGHs will be responsible

for setting up and managing the Fund, while the SWD will be responsible for evaluating the needs and apply for assistance on behalf of the recipients.

The new academic year just began yesterday. The families of the four affected students will decide when they should resume classes after they have undergone assessments by case workers and clinical psychologists. The SWD, the Education Bureau and the relevant schools will work closely together to make the most appropriate arrangements for them. Moreover, education psychologists of the Education Bureau and school social workers will also provide counselling services to students in need in the relevant schools.

On medical support, various specialist clinics of the HA will provide comprehensive, long-term follow-up services to the three injured and continue to provide rehabilitative care and counselling services to them after they have been discharged from hospital.

This tragedy has filled the whole city with grief. Many members of the public were emotionally disturbed while watching the live broadcast on television. In this connection, the SWD and some voluntary agencies in the community have been providing emotional counselling through their hotline services to members of the public who have developed anxiety or emotional disturbance because of this tragedy. Cases requiring further follow-up actions will be referred to appropriate service units. Upon the request of the Hong Thai Travel Services Limited, the SWD had earlier sent clinical psychologists to provide counselling services to its staff.

To facilitate members of the public in expressing condolences to the deceased in the tragedy, the Home Affairs Department had set up condolence points in the 18 districts throughout the territory from the evening of 24 August to 26 August to make available condolence books for members of the public to leave messages of condolence and regards. A total of 38 000 people signed the condolence books. The authorities have also set up a dedicated Facebook page "In remembrance of the Manila hijack victims" and provided the public with the latest information on the incident. As at yesterday afternoon, more than 136 000 people have posted responses on the page.

President, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all the colleagues from the relevant government departments and the HA who

have participated in our support actions. Over the past week or so, they have been labouring day and night to provide counselling and support to the affected families and taking follow-up actions in the aftermath. I would also like to thank all the individuals and organizations for their care and support.

In this unfortunate incident, we can see how Hong Kong people offered their helping hand and extended their care and support to their compatriots in distress, fully demonstrating the rational, tolerant and benign temperament of the people of Hong Kong. These virtues should indeed be treasured.

In their long process of recovery, the affected families are not alone. Apart from the company of the SAR Government, they also have the support and blessing of the 7 million Hong Kong people. May I wish the injured a speedy recovery and that the families in trauma will overcome their shock and grief and return to normal lives soon.

Finally, I would like to make a brief response. Just now, many Members have expressed concern about the relationship between the Filipino domestic helpers in Hong Kong and their employers. I wish to reiterate that this incident does not have any impact on the employer/employee relationship, and we have already made a clarification earlier that many media reports in this respect are far from the truth. Actually, this incident has hardly caused any problem between employers and employees during this period of time, and neither have we received any specific case in this respect. Like Honourable Members, I trust that Hong Kong employers are accommodating and highly appreciative of the contribution made by the Filipino domestic helpers in Hong Kong. It is most important that both parties make efforts to maintain the employer/employee relationship. Hong Kong is a pluralistic society which has always been tolerant.

President, I so submit. Thank you.

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): President, the hostage-taking incident in Manila has shocked the city. As the incident involves an outbound tour organized by a local travel agent, the entire tourism industry is all the more shocked. Right from the start of the

incident, the Tourism Commission, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) and Hong Thai Travel Services Ltd (Hong Thai) have been working with the Security Bureau and other departments to take various measures of support for the injured and the survivors as well as family members of the victims.

On the day of the incident (that is, early morning on 24 August), Mr Michael WU, Chairmn of the TIC, and Mr Paul TSE, Member of the Legislative Council representing the tourism sector, came forward to liaise with the Government in the first instance and travelled on the Government's charter flight to Manila to visit and provide assistance to the injured tour group members.

Mr Masa TSE, the tour guide who was killed in the incident while on duty, has set an exceptional example amongst the tour guides for his bravery and professionalism. The tourism industry is proud of his conduct. Hong Thai will hold a memorial service for Mr TSE tonight so that his colleagues in the industry and the public can pay tribute to Mr TSE and express condolences to his family members. The memorial service will be open to the public after 9.30 pm and Members of the Legislative Council and all sectors of the community are welcome to attend. In support of Mr TSE's family, fund-raising efforts have respectively been organized by various parties including the TIC, Hong Thai and tour guide unions. To date, more than \$2.4 million have been raised. In addition, Hong Thai has also made ex-gratia and condolence payments to the families of Mr TSE as a token of the industry's concern. At present, the Travel Industry Compensation Fund Management Board (TICFMB) will provide *ex gratia* payment up to a maximum of \$180,000 to travellers on outbound package tours. On 24 August, the TICFMB already contacted Hong Thai and entrusted it to notify family members of the deceased and injured of the arrangement for ex-gratia payment and to provide them with all necessary assistance. The Tourism Commission will continue to co-ordinate all aspects of work related to the industry and provide necessary assistance to the deceased and injured as well as their family members.

As the hostage-taking incident may have psychological impact on the practitioners of the tourism industry, especially Mr TSE's colleagues, a special seminar hosted by clinical psychologists has been organized by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) for more than 50 Hong Thai staff including supervisors and departmental managers on how to monitor and relieve the emotions of employees. In addition, the SWD has set up a counselling hotline

for Hong Thai staff and counselling sessions will be held on 30 and 31 August for front-line staff on the techniques of relieving stress. If necessary, the SWD will organize more counselling sessions for front-line staff of Hong Thai or provide them with other related support services.

In the aftermath of the tragedy, we will need to follow up the next stage of work with the tourism industry. First, in order to further protect the personal safety of outbound tourists and front-line staff, we would encourage the industry to enhance training of tour guides and front-line staff in crisis management so as to increase their ability in dealing with emergencies. In order to give further training to tour guides in the handling of emergencies and crisis, the TIC has already liaised with the police and sought its assistance in course preparation with special emphasis on how to deal with riots or terrorist activities encountered by tour groups en route. Training will also be provided to instructors of TIC in how to supervise tour guides and front-line staff.

Prior to this unfortunate incident, the TICFMB had already completed its study and decided to introduce legislative amendments to increase the maximum limit of *ex gratia* payment that each traveller may claim for accidents from \$180,000 to \$300,000. In addition, the current limit of \$40,000 applicable to funeral expenses and compassionate visit by relatives will be increased to \$100,000. Moreover, it is recommended that the restriction on the number of visiting relatives be cancelled and that the maximum limit of expenses for compassionate visit by each relative be increased to \$25,000. Subject to approval, the proposals I mentioned just now are expected to be implemented in the first quarter of 2011.

Regarding travel insurance, the TICFMB is actively studying the proposal on expanding the coverage of travel insurance to losses incurred by travellers of tour groups and tour packages who are forced to cancel their trips as a result of the issuance of red or black outbound travel alerts. In this connection, the TICFMB has contacted the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers to encourage the provision of relevant products by insurance companies so as to enhance protection for travellers. Meanwhile, the TIC is also discussing with the insurance industry the possibility of introducing special insurance cover for outbound travellers to countries under the red or black travel alert. We will encourage the industry to continue to engage in active discussions on this proposal.

I must express my support and heartfelt thanks to the tourism industry for its dedication. Throughout this sad and difficult period, the industry has displayed in full force the hospitable culture of Hong Kong and provided excellent services to all inbound visitors including those from the Philippines. I hope that all Hong Kong citizens, having lived through this sadness, can turn their anger into positive energy and spread their kindness and love around in full realization of the spirit of mutual help and support of Hong Kong.

President, I so submit.

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY (in Cantonese): President, first of all, I would like to thank those Members who have spoken. I notice that Members have expressed the deepest condolences and care to the families of the deceased and the injured. They have put forth many views worthy of consideration on the contingency efforts and follow-up work carried out by the SAR Government this time around. As I mentioned at the outset, the prime objective now is to find out the truth, which will be the best way to give an account to the victims and their families. As pointed out by the two Directors of Bureaux earlier, the SAR Government will surely do its level best in all aspects to follow up the case properly and take good care of the victims and their families. We will follow up the relevant matters with the tourism sector.

My responses to some of the remarks given by Members earlier are as follows:

Some Members hope that the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) can participate directly in the investigation. We may not be able to or should not subrogate the law-enforcement agency of the Philippines in carrying out an investigation. Nor should we intervene in the report they promise to deliver after an impartial and thorough investigation. Despite that, the HKPF have been working on this proactively since the incident happened. All along, we have expressed clearly the requests of the SAR police to the Philippine Government via the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the embassy. Positive responses have been received from the Philippine Government which promised to provide full assistance and allow the HKPF to gather evidence in the Philippines according to the established international practice on co-operation. The HKPF respect the established international

practice and accept that the investigation team of the Philippines has the priority right in conducting investigation. Actually, this will not affect the investigation by the HKPF. After some co-ordination and negotiation, the HKPF went into full gear in collecting evidence on 30 August, which included boarding the incident coach. The progress made in the past few days proves that the collection of evidence by the police has been going on extremely smoothly, and the Philippine Government has really been co-operative and helpful.

Insofar as the established international practice is concerned, Mr James TO mentioned earlier that according to the co-operation under the Interpol, if the HKPF go to Manila to gather evidence and take statements from the witnesses there, several conditions must be met. First, the consent of the witnesses there has to be sought, and second, the process should be conducted in the presence of observers from the Philippine police. Under such circumstances, the HKPF may take statements from the witnesses concerned.

In response to Mr James TO's concern about the Coroner's decision to conduct a death inquest in future, I can assure Mr TO here that the SAR Government will by all means assist the Coroner with the investigation within the law.

Finally, Mr James TO mentioned the five-member investigation panel in the Philippines, which is led by the Ministry of Justice, and he asked whether family members of the deceased and the injured could attend the relevant meetings and raised questions. In this connection, I will respect the wish of the family members of the deceased and the injured and examine whether it is feasible under the law.

President, I understand that the tragedy has brought inconsolable grief to the victims and their families. I also understand that members of the public witnessing the course of the incident through the media feel helpless and saddened. Despite the grief and sorrow, society and members of the public managed to express their emotions in a peaceful and rational manner. Care and support are expressed selflessly at marches, assemblies and memorial gatherings and on the Internet, and through many other channels to the victims and their families. I am really proud of being a member of Hong Kong.

The Philippine authorities have set up a special panel for the incident, under which the investigation work will be led by the Ministry of Justice. The President of the Philippines has undertaken openly on a number of occasions that he will ensure that the investigation will be comprehensive, impartial and complete, where no cover-up or favouritism will be allowed. Actually, this is the objective of the independent investigation to be conducted by the HKPF as per the instruction of the Coroner. The SAR Government believes that the two independent investigations conducted by the two Governments will surely come up with supplementary evidence, helping the public to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the truth of the incident. After all, there is only one truth. We will endeavour to find out the truth to give a factual account to the deceased and the injured and all the people of Hong Kong.

President, I so submit.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms Miriam LAU, you may now reply and you have four seconds.

MS MIRIAM LAU (in Cantonese): President, regarding the fourth point mentioned in the motion, we hope that the Government will continue to take proactive follow-up actions, so as to give a clear account to the deceased and the people of Hong Kong. Thank you, President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Ms Miriam LAU be passed. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(No hands raised)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority respectively of each of the two groups of Members, that is, those returned by functional constituencies and those returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, who are present. I declare the motion passed.

END OF MEETING

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now adjourn the Council. The first meeting of the next Session will be held at 11:00 am on Wednesday, 13 October 2010.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Six o'clock.