

Press Release

CE speaks on the Fifth Report of the Constitutional Development Task Force

Following is the transcript (English portion) of the media session by the Chief Executive, Mr Donald Tsang, on the Fifth Report of the Constitutional Development Task Force at the lobby of Central Government Offices, Main Wing, this afternoon (October 19):

Chief Executive: Good afternoon. The Chief Secretary for Administration has just briefed the Legislative Council on the Fifth Report of the Constitutional Development Task Force. The report outlines the SAR Government's package of proposals for selecting the Chief Executive in 2007 and for forming the Legislative Council in 2008.

The package allows for greater public participation in both elections. It broadens the electorate base and increases democratic representation. It is a significant step forward in our democratic development. I fully support the proposals, and hope they will be supported by the community.

The key feature of the proposals is to increase the democratic representation of the two elections by expanding the participation of District Council members in the Election Committee and in the Legislative Council. This package has not come easily. The SAR Government has left no stone unturned in formulating a package that embodies democracy and openness to the highest extent possible, and is consistent with the Basic Law and the Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

The Task Force has also conducted wide public consultations and held thorough internal deliberations for more than a year. I firmly believe this package strikes the right balance between the views and demands of different sectors. It addresses the community's aspirations for constitutional development, with due regard to the interests of all sectors of society. The package also helps to maintain prosperity and stability by ensuring that our political system can continue to develop in a sustainable manner. An opinion poll commissioned by the Task Force, and undertaken by the Central Policy Unit, shows that a majority of Hong Kong people support the proposals. This package is not being imposed on the public. Rather, it is built upon the majority view of the public.

I understand that some Members of the Legislative Council hold very strong views about the timetable for universal suffrage and the role of appointed District Council Members in the elections. I hope they will act according to the overall interests of Hong Kong and the views of Hong Kong people. I hope they will not allow sectoral interests or their own views to hinder Hong Kong's constitutional advancement.

We are all aware that the Basic Law clearly states that the ultimate goal of our constitutional development is universal suffrage. The SAR Government is proactively working towards this objective. There is no doubt that universal suffrage is the common wish of the community. However, there are still differing views on how best to achieve universal suffrage in terms of timing, methodology and structure. Also, for our political system to move forward, including any timetable to achieve universal suffrage, we constitutionally require a consensus among the Central Authority, the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council. In addition, implementing universal suffrage requires comprehensive support measures. In my Policy Address last week, I highlighted the government initiatives to nurture political talent and to encourage more people to become involved in politics by opening up more channels for participation in policy making.

This is a defining moment for constitutional development in Hong Kong. I call on all political parties, and all sectors of the community, to focus on the community's overall interests and put their own preconceptions and differences on

one side. These proposals will lead us to the ultimate goal of universal suffrage. I hope everyone will give them their full support.

Thank you.

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