

CE welcomes publication of white paper on "Hong Kong: Democratic Progress Under the Framework of One Country, Two Systems"

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, issued the following statement in response to the publication of the white paper on "Hong Kong: Democratic Progress Under the Framework of One Country, Two Systems" by the State Council Information Office today (December 20):

I greatly welcome publication of the white paper on "Hong Kong: Democratic Progress Under the Framework of One Country, Two Systems" by the Central Government today, which gives a detailed and systematic historical account of Hong Kong's democratic development. The white paper points out that there was no democracy whatsoever in Hong Kong under British colonial rule; while on the contrary, the Central Government has been supporting democratic development in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Basic Law since Hong Kong's return to the Motherland. The white paper also outlines the three attempts made by the HKSAR Government, with full support of the Central Government, to promote the development of democracy in the HKSAR. Regrettably, two of these attempts were vetoed by some self-proclaimed "democrats" in the Legislative Council and could not be taken forward. These are hard facts that no one can deny.

From the account detailed in the white paper, one can clearly see that since Hong Kong's return to the Motherland, anti-China forces have not only disrupted the development of democracy in the HKSAR, but they have also been spreading false ideas with ulterior motives to undermine the relationship between the HKSAR and the Central Government. They even challenged the bottom line of national security as well as the authority of the Central Government and the Basic Law under the pretext of "democracy", and used Hong Kong to infiltrate the Mainland, seriously threatening the prosperity and stability of the HKSAR and national security. The publication of the white paper has provided strong justifications for the work done by the Central Government and HKSAR Government to improve the HKSAR's electoral system in order to implement the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong".

As mentioned in the white paper, there is no "one size fits all" in the development of democracy, nor a single superior model. Some countries practicing Western democracy have attempted to impose their own standards of democracy on others, but they do have various problems of their own. Such acts only serve to demonstrate that those countries are overbearing and arrogant. The HKSAR is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China and has been integrated into the national governance system since its return to the Motherland. The democratic development of the HKSAR must conform to

the constitutional order as enshrined in the Constitution and the Basic Law and adhere to the principle of "One Country, Two Systems", while taking account of the actual situation of Hong Kong. In fact, the Basic Law has stipulated the key elements of the HKSAR's democratic system, its principles and the way forward, as well as the ultimate goal of "dual universal suffrage" for the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council. Unfortunately, being misled by anti-China forces, Hong Kong's democratic process has deviated from the Basic Law for years, causing great political disputes in society and hindering the development of the economy and livelihoods.

The publication of the white paper upon the successful completion of the first general election of the Legislative Council under the improved electoral system serves to pre-emptively address the major issue of Hong Kong's democratic development, leaving no room for slandering by external forces. In fact, the smooth formation of the seventh-term Legislative Council through elections manifests the broad representation, political inclusiveness, balanced participation and fair competition of the new electoral system, hence enhancing the HKSAR's democratic system. The HKSAR Government fully supports the white paper and will cooperate with the Central Government to strongly refute any fallacious criticism of this Legislative Council election.

We are much encouraged to note that the Central Government emphasises in the white paper that it will continue to develop and improve democracy in Hong Kong in line with the actual situation and in accordance with the Constitution, the Basic Law, and the relevant decisions of the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee; and it will work with all social groups, sectors and stakeholders towards the ultimate goal of election by universal suffrage of the Chief Executive and all members of the Legislative Council. I encourage members of the public, especially the younger generation and students, to read the white paper in detail to strengthen their correct understanding of the development of democracy in the HKSAR. As long as our citizens have a deeper understanding of "One Country, Two Systems", respect the constitutional order of the HKSAR and proactively safeguard national security, democracy in the HKSAR can certainly continue to move forward in a gradual and orderly manner.