

# HKSAR Government deplores and opposes UK Government's interference in Hong Kong affairs

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) made the following solemn statement today (July 23) in response to the announcement by the Government of the United Kingdom (UK) on providing a pathway for the Chinese nationals in Hong Kong who are holders of the British National (Overseas) (BN(0)) passport or eligible for it to reside and obtain citizenship in the UK.

China resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong on July 1, 1997. Hong Kong is a special administrative region of China. When the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed, the Chinese Government and the UK Government exchanged memoranda in which the UK clearly pledged not to confer the right of abode in the UK on holders of the BN(0) passport who are Chinese nationals in Hong Kong. In fact, the UK government had all along had no intent to confer the right of abode in the UK on people in Hong Kong as reflected in various amendments in its laws or policies before Hong Kong's return to China. Given the history, it is hypocritical for the UK to deliberately violate its pledge made in the British memorandum associated with the Sino-British Joint Declaration paying no regard to the Chinese firm opposition and repeated representations, and insist on using the BN(0) passport or status which some people in Hong Kong still hold for political maneuver on the pretext of changing the policy to provide a route for relevant persons to reside and obtain citizenship in the UK. The HKSAR Government deplores and opposes such move of the UK.

Since the establishment of the HKSAR, the Central People's Government has been upholding and implementing the principle of "One Country, Two Systems". The HKSAR enjoys a high degree of autonomy in accordance with the Basic Law of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China, and has maintained prosperity and stability. National security falls squarely under the purview of the Central Authorities. The enactment of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (National Security Law) is constitutional, lawful, rational and reasonable. Matters of the HKSAR remain our Country's internal affairs. No other state is allowed to interfere in such internal affairs under any pretext.

Taking account of the historical background and the existing circumstances of Hong Kong, the Central People's Government has all along permitted the Chinese nationals in Hong Kong who were born before June 30, 1997 to use the BN(0) passport as a travel document for the purpose of travelling to other states and regions. Since the UK violates its pledge in the first place, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announces today that China will consider not recognising the BN(0) passport as a valid travel document

and reserve the right to take any further measure. The HKSAR Government is in support of this and will follow up accordingly.

Currently, no matter they hold BN(0) passport or not, Chinese nationals in Hong Kong who use the HKSAR passport to travel to other states and regions enjoy not only consular protection and services rendered by our Country but also immigration facilitation. At present, 168 countries and territories have granted visa-free access or visa-on-arrival to HKSAR passport holders. The Immigration Department has issued nearly six million HKSAR passports which are still within their validity period to facilitate the travelling of relevant persons in Hong Kong.

The HKSAR Government spokesman solemnly points out, "The high-profile measures taken by the UK Government on the pretext of the National Security Law are purely made out of political maneuver. They not only seriously violate the UK's own pledge, but also seriously interfere in the affairs of the HKSAR. The UK Government has made it an issue again on BN(0) passport after its unilateral announcement to suspend its agreement with Hong Kong for the surrender of fugitive offenders. The HKSAR Government deplores and opposes such moves of the UK, and urges the UK Government to stop interfering in the affairs of the HKSAR and return to the normal tracks."