

HKSAR Government responds to foreign NGO report

In response to media enquiries, a spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government made the following response today (January 15) to parts of a report related to Hong Kong issued by Human Rights Watch, a foreign non-governmental organisation:

"Since the return to the Motherland, the HKSAR has been exercising 'Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong' and a high degree of autonomy in strict accordance with the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. The 'one country, two systems' principle has been fully and successfully implemented. The HKSAR Government will continue to implement the 'one country, two systems' principle resolutely in accordance with the Basic Law.

"Safeguarding human rights and freedoms is a constitutional duty of the HKSAR Government. Article 4 of the Basic Law stipulates that the HKSAR shall safeguard the rights and freedoms of the residents of the HKSAR and of other persons in the Region in accordance with law. Human rights and freedoms in Hong Kong are fully protected by the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and other legislation, in addition to the Basic Law. The HKSAR Government attaches great importance to human rights and freedoms and is determined to safeguard them.

"In respect of the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019, the Chief Executive announced on September 4, 2019, that the HKSAR Government would formally withdraw the Bill when the Legislative Council resumed business and the Secretary for Security withdrew the Bill at the Legislative Council meeting on October 23, 2019.

"From June 2019 until now, there have been over 1 200 public demonstrations, processions and public meetings in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, many ended in violent and illegal confrontations, seriously endangering personal safety, public order and public safety. In fact, the report also mentioned various violent acts committed by protesters, such as throwing petrol bombs, setting roadblocks on fire and attacking other people. In response, the Police have been carrying out enforcement actions in strict accordance with the law in order to protect life and property and restore order to society. If members of the public could express their views in a peaceful and rational manner, there would be no need for the Police to use any force.

"As for constitutional development, universal suffrage of 'one person, one vote' for selecting the Chief Executive and electing all members of the Legislative Council is enshrined as an ultimate aim in the Basic Law. To achieve this aim, the community needs to engage in dialogues, premised on the

legal basis and under a peaceful atmosphere with mutual trust, with a view to narrowing differences and attaining a consensus agreeable to all sides. The HKSAR Government will assess the situation carefully and take forward constitutional development in accordance with the Basic Law and the relevant Interpretation and Decisions of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. As a matter of fact, the HKSAR Government took forward constitutional development in accordance with law between 2013 and 2015, and put forward a practicable proposal for selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage. However, the proposal was vetoed by Members of the Legislative Council who claimed to strive for democracy."

The spokesman reiterated that foreign organisations should not interfere in any form in the internal affairs of the HKSAR.