

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session at Hong Kong International Airport (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session at the Hong Kong International Airport today (December 28):

Reporter: Mrs Lam, what do you think of the criticism against SJ, saying that she is evasive and not convincing enough? Do you yourself think it has been politicised? Secondly, do you think the public perception of the DoJ has been affected by this case?

Chief Executive: First of all, I have explained and clarified that there is no question of the Secretary for Justice being evasive, the question is – I have approved her leave from the 15th of December to the 26th of December, both days inclusive. And she has informed me that she would be out of Hong Kong throughout the whole period. So without her physical presence, there is no opportunity for her to respond to questions. And I did contact her because you remember that on the 15th of December, before I departed for my duty report in Beijing, I did say that if some Legislative Council members and society have questions and they want more information, then maybe I believed that the Secretary for Justice would be happy to respond. That was on the 15th of December. Then I realised that she was not in Hong Kong and was on leave approved by me. After my reporting of duty and before I departed for my own leave, I did manage to contact her, when she was not in Hong Kong. But she explained to me that actually the statement that the Department of Justice issued on the 12th of December was more or less the whole thing that she could say, and that was also on the advice of the Prosecutions Division. That was all that she could say. She had very little to add or supplement to what has been contained in the press release. And when she came back from leave, standing right here, on the 26th of December, that was the first occasion when she was back in Hong Kong and she was standing here to comment, although you would say that there was little substantive in her comments because she just could not say more on this particular case, especially now that apparently there is a judicial review application against her decision, so the whole matter is now into a judicial process that makes it even more difficult for the Secretary for Justice or colleagues of the Department of Justice to provide any more information. Now as far as the perception, of course as a political officer for many years, I do realise that public perception is important and that is why in this term of government, I have been advocating transparency that we should attend Legislative Council and do explanation but that doesn't mean that we should allow issues which are supposed to be not subject to interference to be unduly interfered and that is prosecution decision. So, we have to stand by principles and they are very important principles underpinning the rule of law in Hong Kong. So on this particular case, I respect the professional decision made by the Secretary

for Justice and her colleagues and I support her decision based on her legal expertise and very rich experience over many years.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)