

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo meeting (with video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting this morning (September 24):

Reporter: Hello, Mrs Lam. The Police has denied accusations that they kicked a detainee on Saturday, saying the video filmed only showing officers kicking a yellow object, so how would you respond to such description? You have repeatedly stood firm on your support to the Police Force, but it is very obvious that the public does not trust the entire Force, so how would you rebuild the trust without setting up of a COI to conduct the Police's use of force? Thank you

Chief Executive: Thank you very much for that question. As I have said earlier in response to a question, when we are so proud of the rule of law in Hong Kong, it does include various important components, and enforcement by the enforcement agencies, particularly Police, is one of the very important elements to ensure the rule of law in Hong Kong. Now, over more than three months of confrontations, street protests and sometimes very blatant violence, I said previously that the Force is under extreme pressure. My support for the Force is because it is an important law enforcement agency that helps us to safeguard the rule of law, but that doesn't mean that I would condone irregularities or wrong practices done by the Police Force. Otherwise there would not have to be all these institutions like the CAPO and the IPCC to look into complaints about individual officers. On this occasion, because of the severity of the protests and the incidents, the IPCC has taken the initiative with my full support to undertake a thematic fact-finding study to assess several important incidents and to come up with recommendations.

It would be very difficult for me as the Chief Executive to offer my own opinion on individual video footage or shots to determine what is right, what is wrong, what is true, what is fake, because there have been so far always different versions to the same incident. So my advice and my appeal are for those affected individuals to come forward to provide the side of the story and to be undertaken in a fair and impartial manner. For example, if there is a complaint to IPCC or to CAPO, I understand that IPCC, in addition to their members of the Council, has about a hundred observers who will be invited to join the interviews, or these occasions to look at videos in order to form a more impartial view of what has taken place. We have to put our trust in these important institutions which have kept Hong Kong going for so many years. I know the level of mutual trust is now relatively low in Hong Kong but we have to make sure that we can continue to operate as a civil society. These institutions will continue to play a very important part in that particular respect. Thank you.

Reporter: Good morning, Mrs Lam. Can I ask what yardstick or criteria will you use to gauge the success of your first dialogue, whether it's on track with your objectives? My second question is now that you're going to be out and about meeting people, do you find it necessary to increase security arrangements so that you nor the venue may be targeted? And my third question is again the police question. Despite the escalating violence that took place last weekend, the Police still say that they're very restrained. Can I ask at which point do you think you will ask the Police to increase their enforcement actions? And may I also ask whether you agree that the current restrained approach is still effective? Thank you.

Chief Executive: I would say that if on Thursday evening, we could have a two-hour session to engage with the 150 members of the public who spend the two hours with us, exchanging views and communicating ideas in a candid, frank manner, that would be regarded as a successful dialogue. It would not be possible for a consensus to be reached after all these tensions in society that we have seen. So, to me, this is one step forward. It will be a long journey to achieve reconciliation in society, let alone to return to the more normal Hong Kong that we are all very familiar with. That would be what my expectation is and I will work very hard to achieve that.

About security arrangements, I don't know whether you were referring to one of my colleagues on Sunday being intimidated and so on. I would say that when we say we want to reach out to the public, we should not put our own personal security on a very high level. But we have to make sure that everything is done in a relatively peaceful and orderly manner. If our reaching-out is a source of major tension, then we have to think twice whether we should do that. Here I want to tell the media that I heard media complain that some of the events attended by Principal Officials were not announced and so you did not have a chance to cover them live. But this is exactly because of the worries, sometimes not ourselves but the organisers, that whether the venue that these events are going to take place will be attacked and so on. So I appeal to you for your understanding. I would very much like to return to the normal situations in which every time I go out, there will be media and we could greet you and talk to you maybe on the topical events of the day.

The Police has been undergoing a very difficult period, as I hope some of you will realise. This is a very long, drawn-out process and filled with uncertainty and unpredictability, so sometimes you don't know when and where certain things will happen. The general comment is apart from some critical incidents where members of the public have major concerns and some different views, the fact that after over three months we have not seen major fatalities in Hong Kong is, by world standard, because I have been meeting overseas dignitaries and senior officials, quite remarkable. You ask me when that sort of restraint will disappear, I really can't tell you because it is really on the ground. It is not for me quite far away from the commander, to be able to judge, let alone to tell them what to do. We have to trust the Force and the commanders in dealing with such a difficult situation.

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