

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session in Beijing

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session in Beijing to conclude her duty visit this afternoon (December 17):

Reporter: Mrs Lam, you did not answer the reporter's question just now about whether independence or national security issues such as Article 23 was mentioned, was part of the discussion with the state leaders. And also a second question, Premier Li Keqiang did mention, did highlight the fact that Hong Kong as a separate customs territory, it hasn't been easy over the past year for Hong Kong to keep a stable economic growth due to this fact. So, did state leaders express concerns that this might continue to be a problem looking forward in 2019, and also what should Hong Kong do about it?

Chief Executive: It's not quite correct to say that I did not answer the question. The question is not answerable because you're asking me to disclose details of my conversation with the leaders, which is not the norm and is not appropriate, because the purpose of my reporting duty is to give the leaders the latest situation in Hong Kong and to receive the leaders' instruction and advice, and it is only normal that I could not disclose what exactly was said and what was not said. But, if you're interested in national security or enactment of local legislation on Basic Law Article 23, I would refer you to what I have said in the Policy Address, and that is exactly still my position today – whoever asked me this question, that would be my position today. I just hope that people will understand that national security is of critical importance, especially with all the changes we have seen in other parts of the world, so to act responsibly to safeguard national security is not only the constitutional duty of myself as the Chief Executive, but should be the duty of every national in the People's Republic of China, including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

As far as the economy, actually if you have heard what Premier Li said, I thought he was very pleased with what we have achieved that the growth so far this year – based on the first three quarters, a real growth of 3.7 per cent, and as you have captured from my sound bite, 3.7 per cent is considerably higher than the average of 2.7 per cent in the past decade. I'm not sure what you're referring to about the instabilities and uncertainties, but Hong Kong will continue to strengthen our fundamentals, including financial services, professional services, logistics and tourism. At the same time, we will grow the new sectors, especially innovation and technology, and that was also what Premier Li has commended us for, that in the past year we have been very active in growing this sector – innovation and technology. And the Central Authorities have given us extreme support in the innovation and technology. We have signed two agreements on co-operation arrangement with the Ministry of Science and Technology as well as the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Things are moving very fast as far as innovation and technology is

concerned and I am pretty optimistic about the development of this new economic sector, but nonetheless, 2019 will be a year full of uncertainties, and perhaps some downside risks. That's why I've been saying in public, especially to the industry people, that the Government will stand by their side. If there's anything they need in order to meet this challenge and to relieve their pressure, my government is very happy and very committed to provide those assistance.

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