

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session on the passage of the Decision on improving the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's electoral system by the National People's Congress (with photo/video)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam at a media session on the passage of the Decision on improving the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's electoral system by the National People's Congress today (March 11):

Reporter: In the resolution, the Central Government mentioned that some grassroots representatives could be added to the Election Committee. What are your suggestions, like if the opposition camp can still be included and who do you think from the grassroots should be added? And how important do you see geographical constituencies in future LegCo (Legislative Council) elections? Some said only 20 or 30 seats would be returned from them. Do you agree that 30 seats could be a better balance or the general public's votes are no longer valued? Thank you.

Chief Executive: First of all, again as I said, at the moment, we only have in front of us a Decision made by the National People's Congress, and many of the details about changes to the selection of the Chief Executive and the formation of the Legislative Council have yet to be deliberated and decided by the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC), so I'm actually not in a position to give you the details, and I want to say that as far as I understand, there will be discussions and sessions being arranged for the Central Government officials to listen to the views of the Hong Kong people. Although, again, I could not give you the exact timing and the number of sessions that will be organised for this sort of listening of views, I'm sure there will be this process before the NPCSC deliberates on the details. You'll have to wait until the NPCSC has discussed the matter. I can only say that based on the Decision made by the National People's Congress, in future there will be 90 seats in the Legislative Council, and in addition to the two methods now returning members of the Legislative Council – one is through functional constituencies, the other is through direct elections on geographical basis – there will now be a third method and that is by elections conducted by the Election Committee members. How to divide the 90 members amongst these three methods, again, is another matter that can only be decided by the NPCSC. Thank you.

Reporter: Earlier today the almost 2 900 Deputies of the National People's Congress approved the most significant change to Hong Kong's elections

without a single negative vote. Is that the sort of dissent Hong Kong can expect in the Legislative Council after this overhaul is enacted? What would you say to those concerned that the system may not provide the oversight necessary to maintain Hong Kong's stability and prosperity? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Yes, you are right, the Legislative Council has very important constitutional duties under the Basic Law, and that is also something that I attach a lot of importance to, and that is check and balance. The Executive needs to be monitored and scrutinised by the Legislative Council, whether in terms of enactment of legislation, answering questions from them, or putting funding proposals to the Legislative Council. All these will not be changed, because we are not dealing with making the Legislative Council more supportive of the Hong Kong SAR Government. We are just making sure that the Legislative Council, being such an important political structure in the Hong Kong SAR, is supporting "One Country, Two Systems", will not do anything to undermine national security and will continue to allow Hong Kong to move forward. I just don't see how, by improving the electoral system in Hong Kong, or even by expanding the number of Legislative Council members from 70 to 90, that the Hong Kong SAR Government will not be monitored and will not be put under this check and balance. It will continue, and we welcome – this sort of constructive interaction is very important for good governance. Even as the Chief Executive and as somebody who has four decades of public sector experience, I would not say that we got everything right when we put them to the Legislative Council. It is through that interaction, in a very healthy and constructive or even critical manner, that we manage to improve the government policies and the government legislation. We will expect this to continue. But what we have seen in the past few years and which necessitates this very timely Decision by the National People's Congress is the opposite. They are trying to politicise everything that we put to the Legislative Council by advocating and promoting this anti-Mainland, anti-government sentiment, or even inviting external forces to impose sanctions on Hong Kong, which are not hurting the Government alone – it's hurting the people of Hong Kong. It is those chaotic situations that we need to deal with in this exercise. It's not about making the Legislative Council less critical of the Hong Kong SAR Government. Thank you.

Reporter: I've got two questions for you today. According to Xinhua, a new vetting committee will be set up to screen all the candidates standing in the Legislative Council elections. How can you convince Hong Kong people that there will still be meaningful elections in the city when opposition politicians can easily be screened out in the process? My second question is about the theme that you have referenced today, "patriots administering Hong Kong". Can you tell us the definition of a patriot? Is a patriot required to love the Chinese Communist Party? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the two questions. First is yes, as stipulated in the Decision approved today by the National People's Congress, there will be a committee called the qualification review committee. So there will be a committee to decide the qualification of individuals – whether they could contest in a particular election. This arrangement is not something new. It

is not something new in Hong Kong; it is not something new internationally. In every election, in every place, there will be a mechanism to certify the qualification of that individual, for example the age, the citizenship, the nationality, the years of experience, and in our case and in many other situations whether that candidate fulfils the requirements of upholding the Basic Law and swearing allegiance to the Hong Kong SAR. Even in previous elections, every candidate had to sign on the nominating form to declare that they are swearing allegiance to the Hong Kong SAR and supporting the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR. This is nothing new.

In local legislation, this very important role of certifying the qualification is carried out by somebody called a Returning Officer, and practically I'm sure you know that the Returning Officer is not a full-time position. It is only whenever there is an election, certain individuals in the civil service will be asked to assume this role of a Returning Officer. He or she alone will decide on the qualification of that particular candidate. Now, the Central Authorities have escalated it to a far more solemn and important level, and that is the setting up of a qualification review committee. This committee, or indeed the proposed improvements to the electoral system, is not to screen out the opposition. I have to make it very clear: this is all about implementing the very important principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong". And again, this is not something alien internationally. I suppose every parliament would require the candidates to be loyal to their country before they could contest an election to sit on the parliament of their country.

You asked about how to decide the "patriots administering Hong Kong". It is again something that has been tested in courts in Hong Kong. You remember there have been a few cases of disqualification of candidates in the LegCo election and the District Council election, and have gone through the judicial proceedings and the judge has already laid down certain ground rules of what will constitute loyalty and allegiance to the Hong Kong SAR and uphold the Basic Law. Specifically you asked a question about whether under this criterion of "patriots administering Hong Kong", the patriot has to love the Chinese Communist Party. The answer is no, because that was not the requirement under what is meant by being patriotic. But of course, one has to respect and accept that the system in the People's Republic of China is a socialist system and governed by the Chinese Communist Party. Loving the Chinese Communist Party is an obligation of the party members. I'm not a party member, I suppose all of you are not party members, but we have to accept because Hong Kong is part of the People's Republic of China, and this system of a socialist system with Chinese characteristics under the Chinese Communist Party is written into the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Article 1. When we said that we have to uphold and respect and safeguard the Basic Law, it also implies that we have to respect and accept the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. We should not do anything to undermine the system in the Mainland of China.

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



完善選舉制度 落實愛國者治港

保一國兩制 促安定繁榮

Improve Electoral System Ensure Patriots Administering Hong Kong
Preserve One Country, Two Systems Enhance Stability and Prosperity

