

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

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session this morning (December 20):

Reporter: Hi, Mrs Lam, how do you think of the "five lights, 10 colours" diversity ambition, now that so many of the so-called people who represent diversity are not getting elected? With the loss of Allan Zeman and Mike Rowse, does it indicate that there's no space for those who can't speak Chinese in LegCo and will this LegCo keep the Government on its toes? And also about your duty visit, what are you going to tell Beijing? Will it include the Government's performance in resolving Hong Kong's housing problems? Thank you.

Chief Executive: First of all, of the 153 candidates, I think there is no doubt that they represent a wide range of people with different background, speaking different languages and of different professions and different political views on a range of issues. The candidates that we have in this Legislative Council (LegCo) General Election have, by and large, met the objective of having that diversity which you described. But at the end of the day, who are the candidates that voters will choose is a question for the voters, not for the Government. What we'd like to see is people from different background, but it is not for me to impose my own expectations or requirements on the voters. I think each and every voter has exercised their free will in selecting the candidates.

I would say and I would expect that working with these 90 candidates would continue to be very exciting because they also have very different opinions on many, many of the social issues that the Government has to face. Language is definitely not a constraint in Hong Kong's political structure, because both English and Chinese are official languages. I'm sure that the seventh-term Legislative Council will definitely discharge their constitutional duty in monitoring the Government's performance, in providing the checks and balances needed in ensuring that the HKSAR Government will perform in terms of promoting economic development, improving livelihood issues and so on. You have to wait and see. There's no point for you to just believe in what I'm telling you, but wait and see, when the new LegCo assumes duty on January 1, I'm sure they will perform what I have just described.

My annual duty trip is to give a full account to the leaders on the latest situation in Hong Kong, in terms of the political situation, economic situation as well as the social situation. I expect to cover a wide range of issues on this particular duty visit because through two very decisive acts of the Central Authorities, Hong Kong is now back on the right track of "One Country, Two Systems"; and under the improved electoral system, we have already conducted two of the three important elections, that is, the elections of the Election Committee as well as the seventh-term Legislative

Council. And I'm sure that I will cover also my 2021 Policy Address which lays out blueprints for Hong Kong to resolve the housing and land problem, and the economic problem. Particularly, this year is the first year of the 14th Five-Year Plan, and I should also take this opportunity to thank the Central Authorities, on behalf of Hong Kong, for the strong support given to Hong Kong in the 14th Five-Year Plan. Since next year is the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I will also report on the preparatory work that we have done to welcome this very important occasion in Hong Kong. Thank you.

Reporter: Good morning, Mrs Lam, three questions. First one, Hong Kong has just held the first Legislative Council election after the electoral revamp. What significance do you think is the release of the white paper on Hong Kong's democracy at this moment? And the paper said that there was no democracy in Hong Kong when it was under British colonial rule, how do you see the role of Sunday's election in the city's democratic system? And the paper also said Hong Kong's governing right needs to be kept firmly in the hands of patriots in order to further the development of Hong Kong's democracy and ensure the steady implementation of "One Country, Two Systems", what do you make of that? Do you think Sunday's election manifests that principle? And the last one, regarding your visit to Beijing, how will you report to the Central Government about this election? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the three questions. This morning, the Central Government has released a very important white paper (Hong Kong: Democratic Progress Under the Framework of One Country, Two Systems) to give a very full account of the development of democracy in Hong Kong under "One Country, Two Systems". I think both the content of the white paper and the timing of the release are very much to be welcomed. One is because we have just finished a very important election, the formation of the Legislative Council following the improved electoral system. I could expect that very soon, there will be a lot of criticisms and allegations against this particular election. The best way to refute those allegations is to look back at history. That's why this white paper has given a full account of the development of democracy in Hong Kong before 1997 and after 1997. I think facts are much more powerful than just imagination or allegations. So that is something that I very much welcome.

Particularly, I have read so much talk and report about Hong Kong's democracy development, which are clearly not based on facts. When they used descriptions like "China's crackdown on democracy" or "the Central Authorities have owed the people of Hong Kong universal suffrage", all those statements were not true. If one cares to read the white paper, which as you have pointed it out, before 1997, there was no serious intention to give Hong Kong people democracy – with over 150 years of governing Hong Kong, the British Hong Kong Government had not attempted to give Hong Kong democracy until the last Governor. And I am sure we are all aware that when the British Government was withdrawing from Hong Kong, they perhaps wanted to leave us some problems with this rush in giving Hong Kong democracy, which had not taken into account the actual situation in Hong Kong.

On the other hand, after 1997, in accordance with the relevant provisions in the Basic Law, the Central Authorities, through important decisions made by the National People's Congress Standing Committee, have made three serious attempts to take democracy forward in Hong Kong. But as this white paper recounts the history, two of those attempts were sabotaged by Legislative Council members who claimed to be pro-democracy. This hypocrisy again is made very clear in the white paper. I certainly welcome a very authoritative account of what has happened in Hong Kong on Hong Kong's democracy development.

Now, of course, the most important basis for enhancing Hong Kong's electoral system is to ensure "patriots administering Hong Kong", because Hong Kong is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China. If our electoral system were to have a loophole that would allow people who were unpatriotic, who actually wanted to use elections to go into Hong Kong's political structure and then undermine national security, or even overturn the Government and collude with foreign forces and so on, it would not be in the interest of the people of Hong Kong and, in fact, the people of the country. It is very important to have this principle laid out in the electoral reform.

Other than that, the electoral system does allow for diversity. In other words, people, as long as they fulfil this patriotic requirement, which is very straightforward, that they have to swear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and uphold the Basic Law – aren't these very basic requirements for Hong Kong being a Special Administrative Region? – As long as they could fulfil this requirement, and as we have seen in the 153 candidates contesting in this LegCo election, they could still join the contest, they could still be elected, and become a member of the Legislative Council.

My Beijing visit is an annual occasion for the Chief Executive to give a full account to the leaders about the latest situation in Hong Kong. And of course, 2021 is such an important year for Hong Kong. I would imagine that I will have quite a lot to cover in my full account to the leaders, ranging from the political scene, that is the elections that have taken place, to the economic development, that is we are seeing a pretty good economic rebound, especially with the 14th Five-Year Plan, I want to express my gratitude to the Central Authorities for giving us so much support. And on the social front, I will address some of the issues of concern to the Central Authorities, the housing shortage and the poverty issue, and what we have done in the last four years, and also what we will continue to do in the coming year as reflected in my 2021 Policy Address. Thank you.

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