

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 (September 5):

Chief Executive: In my statement last evening, I provided a detailed and comprehensive response to each of the “five demands” raised in society over this legislative amendment exercise. More importantly, I outlined four actions, which the Government will take in order to help Hong Kong to move forward.

Action no. 1 is for us to formally withdraw the bill in order to fully allay public concerns. Since my announcement, I noticed that there are still some worries about this particular procedure. I want to reiterate here that the sole purpose of the LegCo procedure is to withdraw the bill. This involves the Secretary for Security, as the responsible Government official, to announce in the Legislative Council that the bill will be withdrawn. There will be no debate and no voting.

The second action is we will fully support the work of the Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC). I noticed that IPCC has announced yesterday details of the members of a panel of international experts, which will help in the assessment and recommendations in the fact-finding study. These international experts are really renowned experts in their respective fields and they come from the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. I pledge that the Government will seriously follow up recommendations made in the IPCC’s report.

Third – from this month onward, I and my Principal Officials, including the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Secretary for Home Affairs, will reach out to the community to start a direct dialogue. People from all walks of life, with different stances and backgrounds, are invited to share their views and air their grievances. We must find ways to address the discontent in society and look for solutions.

The fourth action really requires us to have a better understanding of our society. This is because after more than two months of social unrest, it is obvious to many of us that the discontentment in society extends far beyond the bill. It covers political, economic and social issues, including the oft-mentioned housing and land supply, income distribution, social justice and mobility, and opportunities for our young people, as well as how the public could be fully engaged in the Government’s decision-making. We can discuss all these deep-seated, fundamental issues in our dialogue platform to be established. And I will, in addition, invite community leaders, professionals and academics to independently examine and review society’s deep-seated problems and to advise the Government on finding solutions. My team and I, we hope very much that these four actions can help our society to

move forward. Let's look for solutions.

Reporter: Thank you, the Chief Executive. After three months of protests, what has made you change your mind to withdraw the extradition bill? And was this your own initiative or was it from the Central Government? Thank you.

Chief Executive: It is not exactly correct to describe this as a change of mind. You will remember on June 15 and that is only within a few days, I announced the suspension of the bill, and I also said that the legislative work on this bill will come to an end. And then in early July, in light of the worries about what is going to happen to this bill, I said "the bill is dead". So, as far as the substance is concerned, there is simply no plan to take forward the bill in light of the controversy. But since my announcement of a dialogue with society last month, about two weeks ago, we have been meeting a lot of people from different backgrounds with different political positions, and they gave me this piece of advice, which I now feel that was a very pertinent piece of advice, is that if the Government wanted to start a dialogue, the Government should also take the initiative to provide a basis for the dialogue, and the withdrawal of the bill to fully allay public concerns is one of those important bases for a dialogue. I'm sharing with you the developments over the last two months on how I have come to that decision. The decision is one of the HKSAR Government in the same way that the bill was introduced. The bill was initiated, introduced and taken forward by the HKSAR Government. I'm sure you want to ask about the position of the Central People's Government, so may I just also supplement that throughout the whole process, the Central People's Government took the position that they understood why we have to do it, they respected my view and they supported me all the way. Whether it is in the earlier stages of processing the bill and then suspension of bill and then withdrawing the bill yesterday, this is the same position.

Reporter: Mrs Lam, you still haven't answered the question of why you are making this decision at this juncture because lawmakers from across the political spectrum have said it's too little and too late. So why did you only make this decision now? What went wrong with the government decision making? Because, in your previous answer, those comments that were raised to you in the dialogue were raised in March and April, but you insisted on using the word "suspend" and "the bill is dead", and insisted on not using the word "withdraw", so that was indeed a turning point in your decision making. So can you further elaborate on that?

And on Beijing's role, you haven't answered the question as well because on Tuesday, you showed no sign of backing down on any demands when my media friend asked you the question about "five demands". But on Tuesday afternoon, HKMAO spokesman said we must separate the demands of the peaceful protesters with the violent radicals, and then yesterday you made this U-turn. So does it show that Beijing was pulling the strings behind the Hong Kong Government? Or are you causing more trouble for Beijing when there is all this geopolitics going on?

And thirdly, the question on the Police. A lot of people have said that

it could have been a good idea for you to make the withdrawal in June or July but now this movement is really about the police's role in Hong Kong, and people have lost confidence in the Police. So what would you do to really mend this problem? And even with the appointment of two new members, the IPCC is still a body dominated by pro-establishment voices. Would you do anything to change the composition of members? Thank you.

Chief Executive: There are several questions. To answer your question about whether my announcement on actions yesterday was too little, too late, I suggest, and I hope very much, that this will be looked at in context. I have announced the package of four actions. Each of those actions requires a process of deliberation, and taken together I hope that they would provide a basis for a dialogue and help Hong Kong to break the current impasse. It is not looking in isolation at one of the measures, but we have to look at the four actions together.

Secondly, about the timing of the decision made in the four actions, particularly the formal withdrawal of the bill, I have said that for a while, we were bothered by a lot of disruptions and disturbances and violent acts in society, but two weeks ago, there was a relatively peaceful moment and seizing that particular moment, the Government announced that we should move on to having a dialogue with the people with a view to finding a way forward. And since then, we have been meeting with different groups of people, including people from different political backgrounds or having different views on this particular subject, and we have been given the advice, which I accepted, that if we were to have a dialogue, the Government should be the first one to come out to provide a basis for that dialogue, and this formal withdrawal of the bill, although it doesn't make a difference in substance because there has been no plan whatsoever since my earlier announcement to resume the bill, so despite being no different in substance, this is going to be a useful measure for creating that basis for a dialogue. Yesterday was the best timing to do it and there should be no further speculation about why we are doing it.

The third point is that it has always been our intention and our plan to stop violence. While Hong Kong respects the freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and marches, violence is not to be condoned. If you ask anybody in society, including ourselves, of course we would like the peaceful demonstrators not to go together with the protesters or not to provide a legitimate basis for the really violent protesters who have been attacking our public infrastructure, blocking the roads, storming into buildings and disrupting the normal operations of the airport and the rail. This, I suppose, is a consensus of many people.

Finally on IPCC, it is not fair to describe IPCC as being dominated by certain people with certain political backgrounds. It is a credible and independent statutory body and everyone being appointed by me onto IPCC is taking very seriously their independent and statutory function. The appointment of two new members is really to help with IPCC in a period which they are shouldering almost unprecedented workload arising from the last two, three months, both in terms of dealing with individual complaints – and there

are now quite a large number of such complaints – and also to conduct this very wide-ranging and detailed fact-finding study.

Reporter: ...(about role of the Central People's Government)

Chief Executive: I have answered that in English, actually, to a preceding question. The Central People's Government throughout this exercise of the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance amendments as always respects "One Country, Two Systems" in the same way as the Chief Executive with constitutional responsibilities under the Basic Law, I have to operate under "One Country, Two Systems". So specifically the Central People's Government's position on this bill at various stages is they understand why the Government, the HKSAR Government, wanted to do it. They respect my decision and they support it at every stage. Whether it is in the very early process of taking forward the bill or two, three months ago in suspending the bill or yesterday in formally withdrawing the bill – that is the same position of the Central People's Government.

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