

Video address by CE to members of the public (with video)

Following is the full text of the video address by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, to members of the public today (September 4):

Fellow citizens,

For more than two months, protests arising from the Fugitive Offenders Bill have continued. Our citizens, police and reporters have been injured during violent incidents. There have been chaotic scenes at the airport and MTR stations; roads and tunnels have been suddenly blocked, causing delay and inconvenience to daily life. Visitors wonder whether our city is still a safe place for travel or business. Families and friends have been under stress, and arguments have flared. We have also seen abuse and bullying in some schools and on the Internet. For many people, Hong Kong has become an unfamiliar place.

Incidents over these past two months have shocked and saddened Hong Kong people. We are all very anxious about Hong Kong, our home. We all hope to find a way out of the current impasse and unsettling times.

Of the "five demands" raised by the public, we have in fact responded on various occasions:

(i) First, on withdrawing the Bill. On June 15 I announced that the Bill was suspended and later reiterated that "the Bill is dead" and that all the legislative work had come to a complete halt;

(ii) Second, on setting up a Commission of Inquiry. The Government believes that matters relating to police enforcement actions are best handled by the existing and well-established Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC), which was set up for exactly this purpose. In addition to handling complaints against individual police officers, the IPCC has undertaken a fact-finding study, under its powers, on the handling of large-scale public order events that took place after June 9. One focus will be the Yuen Long incident on July 21 which attracted serious public concern. The study aims to ascertain the facts, to assess the police handling of protests, and to make recommendations to the Government. The IPCC has established a panel of international experts to assist in its work and will make its findings and recommendations public;

(iii) Third, on the matter of the protest being a riot. We have explained that in fact there is no legal effect on how such incidents are described or categorised. The Department of Justice has assured the public that each and every prosecution decision is based on the evidence collected, and is in strict accordance with the relevant law and the Prosecution Code;

(iv) Fourth, on dropping charges against protesters and rioters and shelving prosecutions. I have explained that this is contrary to the rule of law, and is not acceptable. It also goes against the Basic Law, which states that criminal prosecutions must be handled by the Department of Justice, free from any interference;

(v) Fifth, on implementing universal suffrage. Indeed, this is the ultimate aim laid down in the Basic Law. As we said before, if we are to achieve this, discussions must be undertaken within the legal framework, and in an atmosphere that is conducive to mutual trust and understanding, and without further polarising society.

Our responses to the five demands have been made with full consideration of different constraints and circumstances. I recognise that these may not be able to address all the grievances of people in society. However, should we all think deeply whether escalating violence and disturbances is the answer? Or whether it is better to sit down to find a way out through dialogue.

Many would say that we need a common basis to start such a dialogue, and that this has to start with the Chief Executive. I now present four actions to initiate this dialogue.

First, the Government will formally withdraw the Bill in order to fully allay public concerns. The Secretary for Security will move a motion according to the Rules of Procedure when the Legislative Council resumes.

Second, we will fully support the work of the IPCC. In addition to the overseas experts, I have appointed two new members to the IPCC, namely Mrs Helen Yu Lai Ching-ping and Mr Paul Lam Ting-kwok, SC. I pledge that the Government will seriously follow up the recommendations made in the IPCC's report.

Third, from this month, I and my Principal Officials 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 to look for solutions.

Fourth, I will invite community leaders, professionals and academics to independently examine and review society's deep-seated problems and to advise the Government on finding solutions. After more than two months of social unrest, it is obvious to many that discontentment extends far beyond the Bill. It covers political, economic and social issues, including the oft-mentioned problems relating to 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 issues in our new dialogue platform.

Fellow citizens, lingering violence is damaging the very foundations of our society, especially the rule of law. Some people, though not many, attacked the Central Government's office in Hong Kong and vandalised the

national flag and national emblem. This is a direct challenge to "One Country, Two Systems". Both have put Hong Kong in a highly vulnerable and dangerous situation. Irrespective of our grievances, or the depth of discontentment towards the Government, we cannot agree or accept that violence is a solution to our problems. Our foremost priority now is to end violence, to safeguard the rule of law and to restore order and safety in society. As such, the Government has to strictly enforce the law against all violent and illegal acts.

My team and I hope that the four actions just announced can help our society to move forward. Let's replace conflicts with conversations, and let's look for solutions.