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Mr Ismail,

Improving electoral system of Hong Kong

The Decision on improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) was passed at the fourth session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) on 11 March 2021. You may be following the relevant news and development. Accordingly, I would like to take this opportunity to apprise you of the salient perspectives.

The political structure of HKSAR, of which the electoral system is an essential component, is the prerogative of the Central Authorities. The Decision, made in accordance with the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, the Basic Law of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China, and the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the HKSAR, is fully constitutional and legal.

Having considered the actual situation in Hong Kong, the Central Authorities take the initiative from the national level to improve the electoral system of Hong Kong, aiming to ensure that Hong Kong can stay true to the original aspiration in implementing the principle of "One Country, Two Systems". It is only by putting in place institutional safeguards to ensure "patriots administering Hong Kong" that the principle of "One Country, Two Systems" can be fully and faithfully applied in the HKSAR which is conducive to the long term prosperity and stability of our city.

The fundamental principles adopted in the Decision are (i) upholding and implementing the principles of "One Country, Two Systems", "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" and a high degree of autonomy; (ii) firmly safeguarding the constitutional order of the HKSAR as enshrined under the Constitution and the Basic Law; (iii) ensuring "patriots administering Hong Kong"; (iv) effectively enhancing the governance capability of the HKSAR; and (v) upholding HKSAR permanent residents' right to vote and the right to stand for election in accordance with law.

The Decision has authorised the Standing Committee of the NPC (NPCSC) to amend Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law according to the aforementioned principles. Fully supporting these principles, the HKSAR Government will render full co-operation in facilitating the amendments and press ahead with the necessary amendments to the relevant local electoral legislation thereafter. We will conduct and

regulate election-related activities in accordance with the law efficiently, so as to implement the new electoral system that accords with the actual situation in Hong Kong.

The expanded and broadly representative Election Committee (EC), reflecting the overall interest of Hong Kong, is the core element of the improvement to the electoral system. The reconstituted EC will not only nominate and elect the Chief Executive, but also be endowed with the new function of nominating candidates for the Legislative Council (LegCo) election and electing some of the legislators.

The Decision also stipulates the establishment of an eligibility vetting mechanism for the different elections of the HKSAR to provide a robust systemic safeguard for implementing the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong" in our political system. It is only when the offices of the Chief Executive, EC members and LegCo members are filled by determined patriots can the full and resolute implementation of "One Country, Two Systems" be ensured; national security, sovereignty and development interests of the Country be safeguarded; and Hong Kong's long-term stability and prosperity be maintained.

It is natural and essential to require people vested with governing powers to be patriotic, which is also part and parcel of basic political ethics and a principle that applies everywhere in the world. Truly implementing the "patriots administering Hong Kong" principle can ensure effective governance underpinned by the Constitution, the Basic Law and the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. It will then allow us to leverage on our unique advantages to continue to promote economic development and make contribution to the country.

We, as always, appreciate your affection and support for Hong Kong throughout the years. Should you have any question, please feel free to get in touch with us.

Best regards,
Law Kin-wai
Director-General
Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office