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Hong Kong Democratic Progress Under the Framework of One Country, Two Systems

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Contents

Preamble

I. Under British Colonial Rule There Was No Democracy in Hong Kong

II. The Return of Hong Kong to China Ushered in a New Era for Democracy

III. The Central Government Is Committed to Developing Democracy in Hong Kong

IV. Anti-China Agitators Undermine and Disrupt Democracy in Hong Kong

V. Development of Democracy in Hong Kong Is Back on Track

VI. The Prospects Are Bright for Democracy in Hong Kong

Conclusion

Preamble

Under British colonial rule, there was no democracy in Hong Kong. After resuming the exercise of sovereignty, the Chinese government implemented the basic policy of One Country, Two Systems and established democracy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). It has since provided constant support to the region in developing its democratic system. The determination, sincerity, and efforts of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese government to this end have remained consistent and are obvious to any objective observer.

Hong Kong has faced an extended period of damaging social unrest caused by anti-China agitators both inside and outside the region. Over the years, those who attempt to overturn the new constitutional order and destabilize Hong Kong and the rest of China have colluded to obstruct the democratic process. On the pretext of “fighting for democracy”, they have attempted to stage a color revolution, split Hong Kong from China, and seize power there. Their attempts have gravely threatened the order established by the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (Constitution) and the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Basic Law), thus endangering China’s national security and Hong Kong’s stability and prosperity.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, President Xi Jinping has emphasized on many occasions the importance of upholding the One Country, Two Systems policy in the new era. His observations provide the fundamental guidance for its sustained implementation. President Xi has pointed out that in developing democracy in Hong Kong, we must abide by the principle of One Country, Two Systems and the Basic Law and act in an orderly manner, in line with local realities and in accordance with the law. To put an end to the political turmoil of recent years and the serious damage it has caused in Hong Kong, the CPC and the Chinese government have

taken a series of major decisions, based on a clear understanding of the situation in the region. These include strengthening the central authorities' overall jurisdiction over the HKSAR in accordance with the Constitution and the Basic Law, improving the relevant systems and mechanisms to enforce the Constitution and the Basic Law, reinforcing the legal framework and supporting mechanisms for safeguarding national security in the HKSAR, and modifying the region's electoral system, thereby laying the foundations for Hong Kong patriots to govern Hong Kong. These measures address both the symptoms and root causes of the unrest, and have restored order to Hong Kong, returning the democratic process to a sound footing. The Chinese government will continue to implement the principle of One Country, Two Systems fully and faithfully, and it will support Hong Kong in developing a democratic system that conforms to the region's constitutional status and actual conditions.

Developing and improving democracy in Hong Kong is of profound importance in safeguarding the democratic rights of the people, realizing good governance, and ensuring long-term prosperity, stability and security. A comprehensive review of the origin and development of democracy in the HKSAR, and the principles and position of the central government, will help clarify facts, set the record straight, and build consensus. It will further the orderly progress of democracy in Hong Kong, ensure the long-term implementation of One Country, Two Systems, and benefit all local residents.

I. Under British Colonial Rule There Was No Democracy in Hong Kong

Hong Kong has been a part of China's territory since ancient times. In the 1820s, British merchants began smuggling opium into the mainland of China via Hong Kong Island.

After the First Opium War of 1840-1842, British troops occupied Hong Kong Island. On August 29, 1842, Britain forced the Qing government to sign the Treaty of Nanking, the first of the unequal treaties in China's modern history, which ceded Hong Kong Island to Britain.

After the Second Opium War of 1856-1860, Britain forced the Qing government to sign the Beijing Convention on October 24, 1860, which ceded to the UK the part of Kowloon Peninsula south of present-day Boundary Street.

After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, Britain again forced the Qing government to sign the Convention Between Great Britain and China Respecting an Extension of Hong Kong Territory on June 9, 1898, by which the New Territories were leased to Britain for 99 years. The rental payment for this “lease” was zero. As a result, Britain occupied the entire area that is now known as Hong Kong.

These three unequal treaties were imposed on China through British aggression. They were never recognized as valid by the Chinese people or by any Chinese government after the Revolution of 1911.

1. Britain Exercised a Typical Colonial Rule over Hong Kong

A governor was appointed to rule on behalf of Britain without the people of Hong Kong ever being consulted. He was answerable only to the British government and was entirely at its command. His paramount powers and prerogatives in Hong Kong were free of any checks and balances, and he took charge of “all things that belong to his said office”. He assumed all executive and legislative powers, and had the power to appoint and remove all senior government officials and judges. He also served as commander-in-chief of the British forces in Hong Kong.

The Executive Council and the Legislative Council, whose members were appointed by the governor with the approval of the British government and who answered to the governor, were merely advisory bodies on decision-making and lawmaking for the governor. The governor was president of both bodies. It was not until February 1993 that the governor no longer served concurrently as president of the Legislative Council.

Before Hong Kong's return to China, the Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council exercised the power of final adjudication and the power of final interpretation of all laws in Hong Kong.

The British colonial government maintained a repressive rule in Hong Kong, tightly controlling the press and restricting freedom of speech.

In March 1952, Ta Kung Pao reprinted a commentary by the People's Daily on brutalities committed by the British Hong Kong authorities. The paper was convicted of publishing seditious content. A heavy fine was imposed on it, and it was banned from publication.

In August 1967, three newspapers published articles calling on the Hong Kong people to resist oppression. They were ordered to suspend publication for six months, accused of publishing fraudulent and seditious articles, and the newspapers' owners and printers were sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

Local Chinese residents were subjected to surveillance by British Military Intelligence and the Special Branch of the Hong Kong Police Force. Patriotic social organizations and residents who had close ties with China's

mainland were brutally suppressed.

The British Hong Kong authorities practiced racial discrimination against local Chinese, and imposed harsh laws and severe punishments on them.

Over many years, local Chinese were subjected to inhumane punishments such as flogging and hanging. The authorities practiced separate rule over Chinese and Westerners and imposed curfews on the local Chinese. A Chinese person had to hold a pass issued by the police superintendent when going out at night; violators could be punished by fine, detention, flogging, wearing a cangue in public, and even summary execution.

The local Chinese were not allowed to hold public gatherings without approval, with the exception of religious ceremonies and during holidays.

Only European-style buildings could be built in some downtown areas, and the local Chinese were prohibited from living there.

The local Chinese were long barred from entering some premises and sharing certain public facilities with the British.

In judicial proceedings, the Chinese suffered discrimination and were subjected to different penalties from Westerners for the same offense, and the penalties were often severe.

The authorities prohibited patriotic teachers and students from flying the Chinese national flag and singing the Chinese anthem in schools. Patriotic schools were closed down, patriotic organizations were dissolved, patriotic individuals were deported, protests were brutally suppressed, and patriots were arrested. Workers who staged demonstrations were shot at and some were killed.

Local Chinese were long excluded from governance bodies and were denied participation in Hong Kong's governance.

It was not until 1880 that a Chinese was appointed a non-official member of the Legislative Council.

It was not until 1926 that a Chinese was appointed a non-official member of the Executive Council.

It was not until 1948 that a Chinese held the post of administrative officer.

It was not until 1957 that a Chinese became a police superintendent.

It was not until 1989 that a Chinese served as the commissioner of police.

The post of attorney general was held by a Briton right up until Hong Kong's return to China.

2. The British Government Repeatedly Rejected All Calls for Democratic Reform in Hong Kong

People in Hong Kong made numerous demands for democracy, but the British government rejected or ignored all of them. For example:

Over a prolonged period in Hong Kong, there were repeated calls to establish a municipal council, provide elected seats in the Legislative Council, and restructure the Legislative Council, as well as requests for local autonomy. All were rejected by the British government.

After World War II, the international colonial system collapsed and democratic movements surged across the world. In 1946, under pressure from the Hong Kong people, the then governor Mark Aitchison Young made proposals to the British government to establish an elected municipal council and reform local governance, which, however, were refused.

On May 20, 1976, the British government ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Many of the rights were denied to Hong Kong and other dependencies. Article 25 (b) of the covenant provides the right “to vote and be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot...” However, by means of a specific reservation, the British government explicitly excluded “the establishment of an elected Executive or Legislative Council in Hong Kong”.

It can be seen from all this that under their rule, the British colonial authorities suppressed any democratic elements in Hong Kong.

3. The Sudden Interest of the British Government in “ Electoral Reform” at the End of the Colonial Rule Revealed Its Ulterior Motives

In March 1979, the then Hong Kong Governor Murray MacLehose paid a visit to Beijing and was left in no doubt about the Chinese government ’ s determination to recover Hong Kong. The British government then suddenly reversed its previous opposition to democratic reform in Hong Kong, and started a major program to introduce and expand electoral processes. Within a very short period, the Hong Kong district councils and the Legislative Council switched from having all their seats appointed to having most of their seats elected. In particular, in October 1992, soon after he took office, Chris Patten, the last Governor, presented a proposal for electoral reform which violated the Joint Declaration of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People ’ s Republic of China on the Question of Hong Kong (Sino-British Joint Declaration), violated the principle of aligning Hong Kong ’ s future political system with the Basic Law, and violated previous agreements and understandings reached between the two sides. Known as the “Three Violations”, these were imposed in Hong Kong in the face of strong opposition from China.

After the establishment of the parliamentary system, the electoral system of the UK experienced hundreds of years of evolution, but the British government rushed through electoral reform in Hong Kong in the very short remaining period of the colonial rule. Its ulterior motives were obvious. In fact, this was part of a British attempt to portray their withdrawal as somehow “honorable” under a veneer of “British-style representative democracy ” . The intention was to undermine China ’ s sovereignty and full governance and extend British political influence after Hong Kong ’ s return to China, by turning Hong Kong into a de facto independent or semi-independent political entity.

The vicious nature of British colonial rule and the British government's repeated refusal to develop democracy in Hong Kong cannot be concealed or changed. The colonial rule did not bring any genuine democracy to Hong Kong; instead, it laid hidden snares for the development of democracy in Hong Kong after its return to China.

II. The Return of Hong Kong to China Ushered in a New Era for Democracy

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Chinese government decided to resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, and announced the policy of One Country, Two Systems, under which Hong Kong would be governed by the people of Hong Kong, exercising a high degree of autonomy. A blueprint for developing democracy in post-1997 Hong Kong was drawn up.

1. China's State and Political Systems Determined that Hong Kong Would Establish a System of Democracy After Its Return to China

It is stipulated in China's Constitution that all power in the People's Republic of China (PRC) belongs to the people. The organs through which the people exercise state power are the National People's Congress (NPC) and the local people's congresses at all levels. The NPC and the local people's congresses are established through democratic election and are accountable to the people and subject to their oversight. All national and local administrative, supervisory, adjudicatory and prosecuting organs are created by the people's congresses and are answerable to them and subject to their oversight, in full accordance with the principles of democracy. According to the policy of One Country, Two Systems, Hong Kong is a special administrative region directly under the Central People's Government. In common with all other parts of China, its government is organized on the basis of democratic principles, as are its functions. At the

same time, Hong Kong can develop democracy with its own characteristics in light of its actual conditions.

In the early 1980s, the CPC and the Chinese government laid down 12 basic policies on the future status of Hong Kong, known as the 12 Policies. These 12 Policies set out an overall policy and institutional framework for Hong Kong after its return to China, covering political, economic, social and cultural issues, external affairs and other fields. They constitute the core elements of the One Country, Two Systems policy. The fourth basic policy stated that the government of the HKSAR would be composed of local inhabitants, and that principal officials would be selected by election or through consultations held locally and be appointed by the Central People's Government. It thus outlined steps for establishing a system of democracy in post-1997 Hong Kong. This measure – ensuring that Hong Kong is governed by the people of Hong Kong and that the principal officials are elected or selected by means of consultation – was never considered under British colonial rule.

[The 12 Policies are:

(1)The Chinese government decided to resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong as of July 1, 1997.

(2)After resuming the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, the central government would establish a special administrative region in Hong Kong in accordance with Article 31 of the Constitution. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region would be directly under the Central People's Government and would enjoy a high degree of autonomy.

(3)The HKSAR would be vested with legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication. The laws, decrees and

regulations currently in force in Hong Kong would remain basically unchanged.

(4)The government of the HKSAR would be composed of local inhabitants. The principal officials would be selected by election or through consultations held locally and be appointed by the Central People ' s Government. Those previously working in the public and police services in the government departments of Hong Kong may remain in employment. British and other foreign nationals may also be employed to serve as advisers to government departments of the HKSAR.

(5)The current social and economic systems in Hong Kong would remain unchanged, and so would the way of life. Freedoms, including those of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of travel, of movement, of correspondence, and of religious belief would be ensured in the HKSAR. Private property, ownership of enterprises, legitimate right of inheritance and foreign investment would be protected by law.

(6)The HKSAR would retain the status of a free port and a separate customs territory.

(7)The HKSAR would retain the status of a financial center, and its markets for foreign exchange, gold, securities and futures would continue. There would continue to be a free flow of capital, and the Hong Kong dollar would continue to circulate and remain freely convertible.

(8)The HKSAR would have independent finances.

(9)The HKSAR may establish mutually beneficial economic relations

with the United Kingdom, whose economic interests in Hong Kong would be given due regard.

(10) Using the name “Hong Kong, China”, the HKSAR may on its own maintain and develop economic and cultural relations and conclude relevant agreements with states, regions and relevant international organizations. The government of the HKSAR may itself issue travel documents for entry into and exit from Hong Kong.

(11) The maintenance of public order in the HKSAR would be the responsibility of the government of the HKSAR.

(12) The above-stated policies would be stipulated in the Basic Law of the HKSAR by the NPC of the PRC, and they would remain unchanged for 50 years.]

2. The Chinese Government Remains Committed to Developing Democracy in the HKSAR

On December 19, 1984, the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed in Beijing. The document specified that the government of the People's Republic of China would resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong with effect from July 1, 1997 and that the government of the United Kingdom would restore Hong Kong to the PRC with effect from July 1, 1997. The document also outlines the steps to be taken during the transitional period before Hong Kong's return to China. The purpose was not to determine what political system would be implemented in Hong Kong after the handover, and certainly not to define the precise nature of the electoral system.

Paragraph 4 of Article 3 of the Sino-British Joint Declaration reads:
“The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region will be composed of local inhabitants. The Chief Executive will be appointed by the Central People’s Government on the basis of the results of elections or consultations to be held locally.”

Annex I to the Sino-British Joint Declaration further specifies that
“the government and legislature of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be composed of local inhabitants” and that “the legislature of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be constituted by elections.”

These are the sole provisions of the Sino-British Joint Declaration concerning elections in Hong Kong. No mention is made of universal suffrage or democracy.

It is for China to decide what political and electoral systems will be adopted in Hong Kong after its return. During the formulation of the Basic Law, keeping in mind the national interests and the long-term development of Hong Kong, the Chinese government set as the ultimate goal that the Chief Executive of the HKSAR will be selected and the legislature constituted by universal suffrage. The assertion that “the UK secured universal suffrage for Hong Kong” has no factual basis.

The allegations that China has violated the Sino-British Joint Declaration are baseless. In reality, the British government unilaterally altered its policy towards China after the declaration was signed. It made massive changes to Hong Kong laws prior to the return, and since the return it has continued to interfere, with actions that contravene the Sino-British Joint Declaration and other agreements between China and the UK.

Prior to the return, these included creating a proposal for political reform (the OMELCO Consensus), implementing the British Nationality Selection Scheme, announcing an electoral reform package for 1994/1995, and enacting the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance.

In July 2020, the British government issued a new policy for Hong Kong residents to apply for a British National (Overseas) visa as a means for them to emigrate to the UK. The policy was another flagrant violation of the principles set in the Sino-British Joint Declaration and relevant agreements between China and the UK.

Since Hong Kong's return to China, China's Constitution and the Basic Law of the HKSAR have been the foundations underpinning the Chinese government's governance of the region. The UK has no sovereignty, power of administration, or right of supervision over post-1997 Hong Kong, nor does it have the right to intervene in Hong Kong affairs in any form. Legislative interventions and imposition of sanctions, in the guise of "democracy" and on the pretext of overseeing the implementation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, flout international law and international rules, disrupt the successful practice of One Country, Two Systems, and interfere with and undermine the development of democracy in Hong Kong.

3. The Constitution and the Basic Law Established the System of Democracy in the HKSAR

- The Constitution and the Basic Law accord the constitutional powers and duties to the central government to establish and develop democracy in the HKSAR

It is stipulated in Article 31 of China's Constitution that "The state

may establish special administrative regions when necessary. The systems instituted in special administrative regions shall, in light of specific circumstances, be prescribed by laws enacted by the National People's Congress."

The NPC decided to set up a drafting committee for the HKSAR Basic Law on April 10, 1985. On July 1, the drafting committee, consisting of 59 mainland and Hong Kong members, was formally established. Representatives from various sectors of Hong Kong society were involved in drafting the Basic Law, a process lasting four years and eight months.

The Basic Law was adopted at the Third Session of the Seventh NPC on April 4, 1990. It codifies the central government's basic policies towards Hong Kong in the form of a national law and specifies related institutional steps. The Basic Law provides the constitutional basis for establishing and developing democracy in Hong Kong. It also accords the central government constitutional powers and duties to direct and make decisions on the development of democracy in the HKSAR.

The Constitution and the Basic Law together create the constitutional foundations underpinning the HKSAR. They grant the central authorities overall jurisdiction over the region, detail the powers directly exercised by the central authorities, empower the HKSAR to exercise a high degree of autonomy, and confirm the central authorities' right to supervise the exercise of this autonomy. The direct powers of the central authorities are to establish the HKSAR, decide on its systems, organize its government, manage foreign affairs and defense affairs related to the HKSAR, appoint the Chief Executive and principal officials, archive and review legislation of the HKSAR, and amend and interpret the Basic Law. The central authorities also exercise the power to decide on the system of democracy in the region.

- The Basic Law provides the core components of democracy in the

HKSAR and the pathway and principles for its future development

Article 45 and Article 68 of the Basic Law provide the core components of democracy in Hong Kong and the principles for implementation. The original versions of Annex I and Annex II of the Basic Law laid out the methods for selecting the Chief Executive and for forming the Legislative Council in the first decade after Hong Kong's return to China, as well as the processes for amending these methods after 2007. The Decision of the National People's Congress on the Method for the Formation of the First Government and the First Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region was adopted on April 4, 1990 together with the Basic Law, specifying the method to be used.

Hong Kong practices an executive-led system with the Chief Executive at its core. Under this system, there are checks and balances and coordination between the executive and legislative branches, and the judiciary exercises its power independently. In the Explanations on the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (Draft) and Its Related Documents, the Drafting Committee for the Basic Law underlined that to ensure the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, the political system should conform to the principle of One Country, Two Systems and respect the legal status and realities of the region. It should accommodate the interests of all sectors of Hong Kong society and facilitate Hong Kong's economic growth under capitalism. The best practices of Hong Kong's previous political system should be maintained, together with an orderly and phased development of democracy. These are the principles for developing democracy in the region.

Paragraph 2 of Article 45 of the Basic Law provides:

“The method for selecting the Chief Executive shall be specified in the light of the actual situation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative

Region and in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The ultimate aim is the selection of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage upon nomination by a broadly representative nominating committee in accordance with democratic procedures.” Paragraph 2 of Article 68 provides:

“The method for forming the Legislative Council shall be specified in the light of the actual situation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The ultimate aim is the election of all the members of the Legislative Council by universal suffrage.”

This sets dual universal suffrage as the ultimate goal in developing democracy in Hong Kong.

- The Basic Law embodies the principle of Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong, with patriots at the core

Article 2 of the Basic Law provides:

“The National People’s Congress authorizes the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to exercise a high degree of autonomy and enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication, in accordance with the provisions of this Law.”

Article 3 continues:

“The executive authorities and legislature of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be composed of permanent residents of Hong Kong in accordance with the relevant provisions of this Law.”

Article 104 provides:

“When assuming office, the Chief Executive, principal officials, members of the Executive Council and of the Legislative Council, judges of the courts at all levels and other members of the judiciary in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region must, in accordance with law, swear to uphold the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China and swear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China.”

These provisions of the Basic Law encapsulate the principle of Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong, as expressed in the words of former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping: “We are confident that our fellow Chinese in Hong Kong can govern Hong Kong well … Hong Kong must be governed by the people of Hong Kong, with patriots at the core.” These statements set the parameters for Hong Kong’s governance under the policy of One Country, Two Systems, which underpin full democracy in Hong Kong.

– The Basic Law grants extensive democratic rights and freedoms to Hong Kong residents

Under the Basic Law, permanent residents of the HKSAR have the right to vote and the right to stand for election in accordance with the law, and Hong Kong residents have freedom of speech, freedom of the press and publication, freedom of association, assembly, procession and

demonstration, and other rights and freedoms provided for under the Basic Law and the laws of the HKSAR. The provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and international labor conventions as applicable to Hong Kong remain in force and shall be implemented through the laws of Hong Kong.

In addition, the Basic Law stipulates that Chinese citizens who are HKSAR residents are entitled to participate in the management of state affairs in accordance with the law. Furthermore, permanent residents of the HKSAR who are not of Chinese nationality also enjoy extensive political rights, including the right to vote and the right to stand for election. By any standard, Hong Kong's system of democracy is highly open and inclusive.

4. The Chinese Government Put an End to Interference and Established the Governance Structure for the HKSAR

- Striving to secure the “Through Train” arrangement

In order to achieve a smooth transition and transfer of government in Hong Kong, and ensure the effective functioning of the democratic system of the region following the transition, the Chinese government, in consultation with the British government, made a special arrangement for the First Legislative Council of the HKSAR: As long as they met the requirements of the relevant decisions of the NPC and provisions of the Basic Law, members of the final Legislative Council under British rule would be confirmed as members of the First Legislative Council of the HKSAR. This was known as the “Through Train” arrangement.

In October 1992, however, the British Hong Kong authorities unilaterally introduced electoral reform which violated the Sino-British

Joint Declaration, the principle of alignment with the Basic Law, and the agreements and understandings reached between the two sides. This was known as the “Three Violations” .

The Chinese government expressed its firm opposition to this measure. Notwithstanding, with utmost sincerity and patience, it conducted 17 rounds of talks with the British government on electoral arrangements. However, due to intransigence and deliberate confrontation on the British side, the negotiations eventually broke down.

It should be made clear that the Chinese government did not simply overturn the British electoral reform. Instead it adopted a pragmatic approach that took into account the realities in Hong Kong and the principle of developing its democracy in a gradual and orderly manner – an approach that responded to the people’ s reasonable wishes for democracy. Once again, this demonstrates that the Chinese government was committed to democracy in Hong Kong. What it opposed was arbitrary and duplicitous actions by the British side.

– Establishing the First Government and the Provisional Legislative Council of the HKSAR

In accordance with the Decision of the National People’ s Congress on the Method for the Formation of the First Government and the First Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, adopted on April 4, 1990, the HKSAR Preparatory Committee of the NPC passed the Method for the Selection of the First Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on October 5, 1996, and established the Selection Committee of the First Government of the HKSAR on November 2. The broadly representative Selection Committee consisted of 400 permanent residents from various social groups, sectors and backgrounds in Hong Kong.

On December 11, 1996, all 400 members of the Selection Committee cast their votes and elected the First-term Chief Executive of the HKSAR. On December 16 the central government appointed the First-term Chief Executive of the HKSAR. This was the first time in history that the head of Hong Kong had been elected by its people, and it was the first time that a local Chinese citizen had assumed this significant role.

After the “Through Train” was derailed, the HKSAR Preparatory Committee of the NPC had to avoid a vacuum in its legislature once the HKSAR was established. It therefore passed a decision on March 24, 1996 to establish a Provisional Legislative Council. The decision mandated the formation and the functions of the Provisional Legislative Council after the election of the First-term Chief Executive, until the First Legislative Council was formed.

On October 5, 1996, the Preparatory Committee adopted the method for forming this body. On December 21, the Selection Committee elected 60 members from a total of 130 candidates to form the Provisional Legislative Council.

On July 1, 1997, the Chinese government resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, ending more than 150 years of British colonial rule. Our compatriots in Hong Kong have since then truly held their future in their own hands. With the founding of the HKSAR and the inauguration of its First-term Chief Executive and First Government, the system of democracy set up by the state in the HKSAR became fully operational under the framework of One Country, Two Systems. This was a landmark event in the history of democracy in Hong Kong.

There is no question that the CPC and the Chinese government designed, created, safeguarded and advanced Hong Kong ’ s system of

democracy. They conceived the principle of One Country, Two Systems, put in place its institutional framework, built a creative democratic system aligned with the principle, and passed laws to ensure the functioning of democracy in Hong Kong. Thus began an unprecedented endeavor – the governance of Hong Kong by the people of Hong Kong. The establishment of democratic institutions and the exercise of democracy in Hong Kong would not have been possible had China not resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong. It would not have been possible without the deep concern of the CPC and the Chinese government for the people of Hong Kong, and without their commitment to the principle of One Country, Two Systems.

III. The Central Government Is Committed to Developing Democracy in Hong Kong

Since Hong Kong's reintegration into China's national governance system, the central government has remained committed to the policy of One Country, Two Systems and to the Basic Law of the HKSAR, fully supporting the orderly development of democracy in Hong Kong in accordance with the law.

In accordance with the original Annex I and Annex II of the Basic Law, the Second-term Chief Executive of the HKSAR was elected in 2002, and the first, second and third Legislative Councils of the HKSAR were formed in 1998, 2000 and 2004. With these elections, the relevant provisions of the Basic Law for the period prior to 2007 were fully implemented, representing gradual progress in advancing democracy.

On April 6, 2004, the NPC Standing Committee adopted the Interpretation of Article 7 of Annex I and Article III of Annex II to the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (April 6 Interpretation), laying out the statutory procedures that must be followed in amending the methods for selecting the

Chief Executive and for forming the Legislative Council of the HKSAR (Two Methods). The April 6 Interpretation established procedures for making the Two Methods more democratic after 2007, and for eventually moving towards dual universal suffrage.

The central government has advanced the system of democracy in Hong Kong pursuant to these procedures. It has taken three significant steps.

1. First Step: Giving Approval to Amend the Election Methods for the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council

On April 15, 2004 in accordance with the April 6 Interpretation, the Chief Executive of the HKSAR submitted to the NPC Standing Committee the Report on Whether There Is a Need to Amend the Methods for Selecting the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in 2007 and for Forming the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in 2008. The report conveyed both the desire of the majority of Hong Kong people to make the Two Methods more democratic, and the views held by some people in Hong Kong that the 2007 election of the Chief Executive and the 2008 election of all Legislative Council members should be conducted by universal suffrage.

After soliciting opinions from various sectors of Hong Kong, on April 26, 2004, the NPC Standing Committee adopted the Decision on Issues Relating to the Methods for Selecting the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the Year 2007 and for Forming the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the Year 2008 (April 26 Decision).

In the decision it was pointed out that as democratic elections were

new in Hong Kong, and as there were substantial differences of opinion in Hong Kong on how to amend the Two Methods, the conditions were not yet ripe in Hong Kong for electing the Chief Executive and Legislative Council by universal suffrage. Universal suffrage would therefore not be adopted in the election of the Third-term Chief Executive in 2007 or the election of all members of the Fourth Legislative Council in 2008. Appropriate amendments consistent with the April 26 Decision could therefore be made to the Two Methods in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Basic Law and the principle of making gradual and orderly progress.

The April 26 Decision created more scope for expanding democracy in Hong Kong. This was the first major step taken by the central government to advance the region's system of democracy.

Acting in accordance with the April 26 Decision, on October 19, 2005 the HKSAR government presented the Package of Proposals for the Methods for Selecting the Chief Executive in 2007 and for Forming the Legislative Council in 2008. These proposals made the Two Methods more democratic, and won the support of the majority of Hong Kong people. However, they did not secure the required two-thirds majority in the Legislative Council vote on December 21, 2005, as some self-styled “democrats” on the council voted against the package.

As a result, the first opportunity to improve democracy after 2007 was lost, and the Third-term Chief Executive was selected in 2007 and the Fourth Legislative Council was formed in 2008 in accordance with the existing methods. The responsibility for this missed opportunity lies entirely with those seeking confrontation and conflict and attempting to overturn the constitutional order and destabilize Hong Kong.

2. Second Step: Setting a Timetable for Universal Suffrage

After the Third-term Chief Executive of the HKSAR was elected in 2007, the people of Hong Kong hoped that a timetable could be set as early as possible for universal suffrage, and that methods for electing the Fourth-term Chief Executive and for forming the Fifth Legislative Council in 2012 could be adopted.

On December 12, 2007, the Chief Executive of the HKSAR submitted to the NPC Standing Committee the Report on the Public Consultation on Constitutional Development and on Whether There Is a Need to Amend the Methods for Selecting the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and for Forming the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in 2012.

On December 29, 2007, the NPC Standing Committee adopted the Decision on Issues Relating to the Methods for Selecting the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and for Forming the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the Year 2012 and on Issues Relating to Universal Suffrage (December 29 Decision). This decision allowed that appropriate amendments could be made to the Two Methods for elections in 2012, the Fifth-term Chief Executive could be elected by universal suffrage in 2017, and after the election of the Chief Executive, all the members of the Legislative Council could also be elected by universal suffrage.

By making the December 29 Decision, the NPC Standing Committee gave approval to amend the Two Methods for the 2012 elections. In particular, the timetable for universal suffrage was set. The central government had pledged that its basic policies regarding Hong Kong would remain unchanged for 50 years from 1997. The timetable for universal suffrage to begin in 2017, which was early in the first half of the 50-year period, highlighted the commitment of the central government to realizing the goal of dual universal suffrage laid down in the Basic Law of the HKSAR. This was the second major step taken by the central government to advance the system of democracy in Hong Kong.

On April 14, 2010, in accordance with the December 29 Decision, the HKSAR government released the Package of Proposals for the Methods for Selecting the Chief Executive and for Forming the Legislative Council in 2012 and submitted it to the Legislative Council on June 7. The main features of the package are as follows: The members of the Election Committee would increase in number from 800 to 1,200, and the number of seats in the Legislative Council would expand from 60 to 70.

On June 24-25, 2010, the Legislative Council adopted the proposals to amend the methods for electing the Chief Executive and forming the Legislative Council in 2012.

On July 28, 2010, the Chief Executive gave consent to the amendments and submitted them to the NPC Standing Committee for approval and for the record.

On August 28, 2010, the NPC Standing Committee approved the amendments and placed them on the record.

In March and September 2012, the Fourth-term Chief Executive and the Fifth Legislative Council were elected by the new methods.

The amended methods further increased democracy in the Hong Kong electoral system, fully demonstrating the goodwill and readiness of the central government to support the development of democracy in Hong Kong.

3. Third Step: Drawing Up a Roadmap for Electing the Chief Executive by Universal Suffrage

As 2017 drew near, the people of Hong Kong hoped that the method for electing the Fifth-term Chief Executive of the HKSAR by universal suffrage could be agreed as quickly as possible. On July 15, 2014, the Chief Executive of the HKSAR submitted to the NPC Standing Committee the Report on Whether There Is a Need to Amend the Methods for Selecting the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in 2017 and for Forming the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in 2016.

On August 31, 2014, after soliciting opinions from a broad sector of the Hong Kong public, the NPC Standing Committee made the Decision on Issues Relating to the Selection of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region by Universal Suffrage and on the Method for Forming the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the Year 2016 (August 31 Decision).

In view of the realities in Hong Kong and in response to the wishes of the majority of people in Hong Kong, the NPC Standing Committee reaffirmed in the August 31 Decision that from 2017 the Chief Executive of the HKSAR would be elected by universal suffrage, and it specified the key elements of the method. It was also reaffirmed that after the election of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage, all the members of the Legislative Council of the HKSAR would likewise be elected by universal suffrage.

This decision set out the principles and guidelines for electing the Chief Executive by universal suffrage, a step taken by the central government to fulfill its constitutional responsibility. It was also the third major step taken by the central government to advance democracy in Hong Kong.

However, clinging to a confrontational mindset and disregarding the relevant provisions of the Basic Law, the self-styled “democratic” camp in Hong Kong ferociously attacked the August 31 Decision. It rejected the method proposed by the HKSAR government on the basis of the August 31 Decision, and instead demanded “civic nomination” for the post of Chief Executive in flagrant violation of the Basic Law.

In an attempt to coerce the central government into withdrawing the August 31 Decision and incite a color revolution in Hong Kong, its followers launched the illegal Occupy Central movement on September 28, 2014, which lasted 79 days.

After taking lawful action to end the movement, on June 18, 2015 the HKSAR government submitted the motion on the method for electing the Chief Executive by universal suffrage to the Legislative Council to a vote. The “democrats” on the council again voted against the motion, blocking its passage. As a result, the goal of electing the Fifth-term Chief Executive in 2017 was not realized as envisioned, and the old method was maintained. Once again democracy in Hong Kong was held back by those seeking to overturn the constitutional order and destabilize Hong Kong.

In the face of repeated interference and disruptions, the central government has never wavered in its commitment to support Hong Kong in developing democracy and has never faltered in its efforts towards this goal.

From 1997 to 2017, four elections were held for the Chief Executive and six elections for the Legislative Council, all in accordance with the law. The methods for conducting these elections have become increasingly democratic, and the lawful rights of all permanent residents in Hong Kong to vote and stand for election are fully protected.

Chinese citizens who are permanent residents of the HKSAR can participate in the governance of both Hong Kong and the country as empowered by law. For example, in accordance with the assigned number of seats and the selection method specified by the NPC, Chinese nationals who are HKSAR residents can elect 36 deputies from Hong Kong to participate in the work of the NPC, China's highest body of state power.

More than 5,600 representatives from all walks of life in Hong Kong serve as members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) at all levels, including over 200 in the CPPCC National Committee. Many Hong Kong people work in leadership positions or serve as advisers in the central and local governments and in social organizations.

The central government has given support and assistance to professionals and outstanding young people in Hong Kong to help them work in international organizations and thus become involved in global governance.

Any rational observer can clearly see that since Hong Kong's return to China, its people have gained much greater access to political participation and enjoy more democratic rights than ever before. Democracy in Hong Kong is flourishing.

IV. Anti-China Agitators Undermine and Disrupt Democracy in Hong Kong

Taking advantage of the profound changes that are sweeping the world, anti-China forces have ramped up their efforts. The implementation

of the One Country, Two Systems policy in Hong Kong is faced with a situation of growing complexity, both internally and externally, and the struggle over the development of democracy in the region has intensified.

The instigators of disorder have been challenging the authority of the Constitution and the Basic Law, with the goal of seizing power in Hong Kong through a color revolution. Exploiting their elected positions on the Legislative Council and district councils, and otherwise abusing their capacity as holders of public office, these anti-China agitators openly challenge the One Country, Two Systems principle, the constitutional order, and the rule of law in Hong Kong. They carry out activities detrimental to China's national security and Hong Kong's prosperity and stability, in an attempt to derail the development of democracy in the region. This has had a serious impact on the social environment and on progress towards democracy.

1. Rejecting the Constitutional Order and Endangering National Security

- The agitators openly challenge the HKSAR order established by the Constitution and the Basic Law

They refuse to recognize the legal authority of the Constitution over Hong Kong, attempt to sever the link between the Constitution and the Basic Law, and reject the authority of the Basic Law.

In an attempt to undermine the Basic Law, they falsely claim that the Sino-British Joint Declaration became the legal foundation of the new constitutional order of Hong Kong following its return to China, and tout the claims of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance – rushed through before the end of the British rule in Hong Kong – in the region's legal

system. They push for unlawful referendums and espouse ideas such as “the Constitution devised by the people” in election campaigns, in an attempt to overturn the constitutional order.

To obstruct the central authorities’ overall jurisdiction over Hong Kong, they have gone out of their way to create chaos. They refuse to accept the central authorities’ leadership and their right to determine the course of democracy in Hong Kong, and they refuse to recognize the authority of the relevant decisions and interpretations of the National People’s Congress and its Standing Committee.

They have engaged in provocative public acts such as burning, tearing down, and stamping on the national flag. They have defaced the national emblem, and ripped and burned copies of the Basic Law. As a result of their concerted filibuster, the local legislation on national security required by Article 23 of the Basic Law has been stalled, and it took 18 months for the National Anthem Ordinance to pass through the Legislative Council.

- The agitators carry out defiant acts of subversion and secession

They call for referendums to separate Hong Kong from China, incite anti-China, anti-CPC and secessionist sentiment throughout Hong Kong society, especially among young people, and attack the CPC’s leading role and the socialist system practiced on the mainland. Their goal is to subvert the sense of national identity and manipulate public support in favor of their plans to undermine state power and split the country.

They have founded various radical secessionist organizations, and they run for Legislative Council and district council elections under a banner of “Hong Kong independence”. Once elected to public office, they

abuse their power to promote secession and engage in separatist and subversive activities. When taking the oath of office on October 12, 2016, some members-elect of the Sixth Legislative Council displayed banners reading “Hong Kong Is Not China” and “Hong Kong Independence” .

During the 2019 turmoil, they chanted separatist slogans such as “liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times” , besieged and stormed the resident offices of the central government in Hong Kong and HKSAR government agencies, and even forced entry into the Legislative Council Complex. Inside the building they created ugly scenes, wrecking facilities and displaying the British Hong Kong flag on the podium.

In defiance of the Law of the People ’ s Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong National Security Law) enacted in June 2020, they organized an unlawful primary after the election for the Seventh Legislative Council had begun. They have described a process that they call “Ten Steps to Actualize Mutual Destruction ” [“ Ten Steps to Actualize Mutual Destruction ” is an action plan designed to exploit the loopholes in Hong Kong ’ s electoral system to gain a majority and dominance of the Legislative Council. By indiscriminately voting down any government budget proposal or bill at the Legislative Council, they aim to paralyze the HKSAR government and force the NPC Standing Committee to announce that Hong Kong has entered a state of emergency. They hope to provoke the central government into a heavy-handed response to a crisis created for that purpose. The goal is simple and sinister: to provide Western countries with a pretext to interfere, imposing political and economic sanctions on the CPC and the Chinese government and finally overthrowing the state power.] and they have used it to manipulate the election for the Legislative Council. Their intention was to veto any bills and motions from the government after taking control of the Legislative Council, and subvert the government by forcing the Chief Executive to resign, paralyzing the government, and creating a constitutional crisis.

- The Hong Kong agitators collude with external anti-China forces, and make themselves their willing tools

Their leading figures make frequent visits to other countries to smear and attack China and call for foreign sanctions on the mainland and Hong Kong. Some members regard themselves as political agents of other countries and pledge to fight for the US; others publish articles inciting their followers to turn Hong Kong under One Country, Two Systems into a “Trojan horse for mass killings” which could open a backdoor to “regime change” in China.

External forces, who have masterminded attempts to provoke a color revolution behind the scenes, have intensified their meddling in Hong Kong affairs, posing a growing threat to China’s national security. Now stepping into public view, they hold high-profile meetings with leading agitators, openly champion their cause, and pledge their support. By legislative or administrative means and through such channels as their agencies and NGOs in Hong Kong, they have provided the Hong Kong element with cover, funds and training and imposed baseless sanctions on mainland and Hong Kong officials. Such moves expose their determination to use Hong Kong as a pawn in their attempts to toxify China and hamstring its progress.

2. Destroying the Foundations of the Rule of Law and Inciting Hatred in Society

- Agitators in Hong Kong have instigated, abetted, organized, and engaged in illegal activities

The agitators call for civil disobedience and lawbreaking “in the interests of justice”, instigating the public to achieve unlawful ends through

unlawful means. During the Occupy Central movement in 2014, the Mong Kok riot in 2016, and the 2019 turmoil, they planned, organized, and carried out a series of illegal activities, posing a serious threat to law and order in Hong Kong.

They have justified and incited violence as a means to solve Hong Kong's political issues, asserting that "a criminal record adds color to life". At their instigation and under their coercion, young students became the main participants of the Occupy Central movement in 2014 and the 2019 turmoil. The agitators poison young minds, and the harm they have done to the young people of Hong Kong is unforgivable.

– The agitators are perpetrators of violence and terrorism

During the 2019 turmoil, mobs barricaded roads and damaged transport facilities, even paralyzing the airport at some points. When the situation was at its worst, 147 Mass Transit Railway stations – more than 90 percent of the total – were damaged. The Cross-Harbour Tunnel, a vital transport link, was closed. Hong Kong International Airport, a hub of Asia-Pacific aviation, was paralyzed.

Public services were obstructed. Kindergartens, elementary schools, secondary schools, and universities had to suspend operations for days, and many university campuses were illegally occupied. Shops could not open for business, and over 1,200 commercial outlets and many banks were vandalized.

The mobs attacked people who stood up to them. They beat a journalist and kept him trapped for several hours at the airport. A passer-by who tried to talk some sense into them was set on fire with gasoline. A sanitation worker was hit by a brick and killed. The graves of the parents of

a Legislative Council member were dug up in broad daylight.

- The agitators have set people at odds with each other, poisoning the public sphere

They have incited hatred among local people towards the CPC, their mainland compatriots, and the country. They have manipulated polls to mislead people into questioning their identity and to drive a wedge between Hong Kong and the mainland.

They have fanned the flames of minor conflicts between locals and people from the mainland, or themselves provoked such problems, in order to harass, insult and attack mainland visitors. They have stirred up anti-government sentiment through malicious verbal attacks on the Chief Executive and other officials of the HKSAR government.

During the 2019 turmoil, they turned on the police who were trying to maintain order and members of the public who were trying to prevent their unlawful activities. They illegally exposed the personal information of police officers and other officials, and bullied and verbally abused the children of police officers. One police officer had his finger bitten off, another was shot with a crossbow bolt, and yet another had his throat slit. These are shocking levels of violence.

3. Obstructing Governance and Dragging Down the Economy

- Agitators in Hong Kong have obstructed government administration

They have engaged in filibustering at the Legislative Council by repeatedly moving motions for amendments that contravene the Basic Law and issuing repeated calls for unnecessary headcounts.[Filibustering is a tactic often adopted by minority parties in Western parliaments when they do not have the numbers to block a bill with a vote, or when they want to force the ruling party or the majority into making concessions. Since 2010, in order to further their illegitimate goals, members of the opposition in the HKSAR Legislative Council have been abusing the Rules of Procedure by challenging the procedures themselves, by making marathon speeches, and by issuing repeated calls for headcounts. This has severely obstructed the normal operation of the council, seriously disrupted the region ' s governance, and delayed the passage of a number of key bills designed to strengthen Hong Kong ' s economy and improve people ' s lives.] This has prevented the passage of many major policies that could have benefitted Hong Kong ' s economy and improved the people ' s lives. The opposition members of the Legislative Council have abused their powers of investigation, summons and inquiry, proposing motions of no confidence and insulting holders of public office.

For example, it took the Legislative Council three years to pass the motion to set up the Innovation and Technology Bureau, an institution of far-reaching significance for Hong Kong ' s future development. The House Committee of the Sixth Legislative Council was unable to function for more than eight months in the 2019-2020 legislative session, with the result that 14 bills and over 80 items of subsidiary legislation were not scrutinized and followed up before their vetting period expired. Bills dealing with matters such as improving welfare for local residents and vulnerable communities failed to pass due to the standstill.

– Some agitators hold seats on the Legislative Council and district councils, and have employed various means to paralyze it

For example, at a meeting on April 24, 2018, a council member snatched the mobile phone of a government employee.[On April 24, 2018, while the Legislative Council was discussing a bill on the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, opposition member Ted Hui Chi-fung forcibly grabbed the mobile phone of a female public officer. He retreated to the men's room to read the government documents in her phone and send some of them to himself by email. On May 27, 2019 he was convicted of common assault, obstructing a public officer in the execution of official duties, and accessing a computer with dishonest intent.] When the Chief Executive was delivering the annual Policy Address on October 16, 2019, a group of opposition members used dazzling lights to stop her from completing the address.[On October 16, 2019, while the Chief Executive was delivering the annual Policy Address to the Legislative Council, a group of opposition members interrupted her from the very beginning by using dazzling lights and projecting a slogan onto the wall behind her. They also climbed onto their desks and began to shout and yell. As the meeting descended into chaos, the Chief Executive was forced to leave and had to deliver her address via video link.] At the sessions of May 28 and June 4, 2020, a council member hurled a noxious liquid at the president of the Legislative Council and other people in the room.

These intolerable acts all violate the law, disrupt the functioning of the Legislative Council, pit legislation against administration, hamstring the HKSAR government, and prevent it from doing its work.

The agitators have abused the statutory functions of the district councils and misused their power. They have tried to turn district councils into a platform to engage in secessionist and subversive activities, creating further instability in Hong Kong.

4. Perverting Democracy and Impeding Its Progress

- The agitators have perverted the meaning of democracy

The agitators have misled public opinion by portraying Hong Kong as a sovereign country. They judge democracy as “true” or “fake” only by their own criteria – that is, whether it can help them come to power.

Regarding the method for electing the Chief Executive by universal suffrage, they have concocted criteria that they claim to be the base for “universal suffrage by international standards” , and they have raised proposals that violate the Basic Law. They have gone on to sabotage the efforts to advance democracy in Hong Kong, made by the central government and the HKSAR government.

- The agitators have disrupted fair and orderly electoral processes

During the elections for the sixth-term district councils in November 2019, opposition candidates used violence, coercion, and threats to intimidate voters and patriotic candidates. Assassination attempts were even made on candidates in broad daylight. As the Electoral Affairs Commission of the HKSAR reported, during these elections there was a surge in complaints, more than 1,000 of which were about acts of sabotage, violence and intimidation that constituted criminal offenses.

- The agitators have constantly obstructed the gradual and orderly development of democracy in Hong Kong

Disregarding the public will, they twice voted down proposals delivered by the HKSAR government to the Legislative Council for expanding democracy in local elections. Without their obstruction, Hong Kong could have realized universal suffrage in the election of its Chief

Executive by 2017 and the election of all members of its Legislative Council by 2020. They have wreaked havoc on the social foundations of democracy in Hong Kong, attempting to provoke hostility between the central government and the region.

All this demonstrates that the agitators in Hong Kong and the external groups behind them must be held to account for threatening the principle of One Country, Two Systems, endangering national security, damaging the region ' s prosperity and stability, and impeding its progress towards democracy.

Progress towards democracy has stalled in the region because of the local agitators and the external groups behind them – the former are the frontline saboteurs and the latter the covert masterminds. Hong Kong youth have become their pawns, and local residents are the victims who will suffer the consequences of this dangerous game.

The 2019 turmoil and the chaos in the election for district councils both revealed shortcomings in the electoral system of the HKSAR. The most obvious of them is laxity in the electoral process, which has allowed agitators to be easily elected into Hong Kong ' s governing organizations. This opens the way for external forces to meddle in Hong Kong ' s affairs in various ways, thereby providing themselves with the means to infiltrate China ' s mainland and engage in acts of subversion. Development of democracy in any country should never come at the expense of national security. Improving the democratic system of the HKSAR, especially its electoral system, is a prerequisite for governing Hong Kong by law and keeping the region on the right track – itself essential for safeguarding national security and the constitutional order, and as a foundation for sound progress in steering Hong Kong towards democracy.

V. Development of Democracy in Hong Kong Is Back on Track

The 2019 turmoil was a painful blow to national security, the rule of law, and social and economic stability in Hong Kong. At the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee concluded on October 31, 2019, the following decisions were made: to reinforce the legal framework and supporting mechanisms for safeguarding national security in the special administrative regions; to support the regions in strengthening law enforcement; to improve the systems and mechanisms for enforcing the Constitution and the Basic Law in the two regions; to ensure Hong Kong and Macao are governed by patriots; to build up the capacity of the special administrative regions to govern in accordance with the law; to grant zero tolerance to any attempt to challenge the One Country, Two Systems principle or divide the country. The central government responded swiftly to the turmoil by taking a series of decisive measures that addressed both the symptoms and root causes of the unrest, restored order, and brought Hong Kong and democracy back on track.

1. Formulating and Enforcing the Hong Kong National Security Law Has Created Favorable Conditions for the Development of Democracy

National security is of paramount significance for any country. The central government bears a fundamental responsibility for matters of national security pertaining to the HKSAR, and the HKSAR bears a constitutional responsibility for safeguarding national security. On May 28, 2020, at the Third Session of the 13th NPC, the Decision on Establishing and Improving the Legal System and Enforcement Mechanisms for Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region was adopted. The decision set the guidelines on establishing the legal framework and supporting mechanisms for safeguarding national security in the HKSAR. It authorized the NPC Standing Committee to formulate legislation to effectively prevent, halt, and punish any acts and activities severely jeopardizing national security in the region. On June 30, the NPC Standing Committee passed the Hong Kong National Security Law and included it in Annex III to the Basic Law. On the same day, the HKSAR government released the Hong Kong National Security Law and had it published on The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative

Region Gazette for enforcement.

The Hong Kong National Security Law stipulates four offenses – secession, subversion of state power, organization and perpetration of terrorist activities, and collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security – and the corresponding penalties. This law improves the enforcement mechanisms for safeguarding national security at both national and HKSAR levels, and it defines the criteria for eligibility and the required qualifications of candidates or nominees for public service positions in Hong Kong. The promulgation and enforcement of the Hong Kong National Security Law provides a strong legal safeguard for protecting national security in Hong Kong. It has dealt a heavy blow to extremist advocates of independence, and it has been instrumental in quickly quelling riots and restoring order in Hong Kong. The law marks a milestone in advancing the cause of One Country, Two Systems.

Whatever form of democracy runs in any country, it must first and foremost safeguard national security. There can never be workable, authentic democracy without security. To safeguard national security and to develop democracy in the HKSAR, solid measures must be taken to prevent, halt, and punish offenses that seriously undermine national security. The enforcement of the Hong Kong National Security Law has created favorable conditions for restoring order to the process of building democracy in Hong Kong.

2. Rules Have Been Formulated for Hong Kong Public Servants to Stand for Election, Assume Office, and Take the Oath of Office

On November 7, 2016, following an incident when some members of the Sixth Legislative Council of the HKSAR insulted China and the Chinese nation when taking the oath of office, the NPC Standing Committee adopted the Interpretation of Article 104 of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. The

interpretation prescribes that upholding the Basic Law and pledging allegiance to the HKSAR are the legal requirements and prerequisites for standing for election or assuming public office in Hong Kong. The interpretation defines the act of taking the oath of office in accordance with the law as well as its legal weight and the legal responsibility it entails. It thus sets rules for oath-taking by members of the Legislative Council and other holders of public office in Hong Kong, and serves as a legal safeguard to prevent agitators from infiltrating the Hong Kong government system by means of elections.

On August 11, 2020, in response to a proposal made to the State Council by the Chief Executive to avoid the absence of a legislature caused by the postponement of the Seventh Legislative Council election due to Covid-19, the NPC Standing Committee adopted the Decision on the Continuing Discharge of Duties by the Sixth Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The decision affirmed that after September 30, 2020, the Sixth Legislative Council of the HKSAR would continue to discharge duties for no less than one year until the Seventh Legislative Council started functioning.

On November 11, 2020, to resolve disputes concerning the continued qualification of a few members of the Legislative Council, the NPC Standing Committee adopted the Decision on Issues Relating to the Qualification of the Members of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. It provides that a member of the Legislative Council of the HKSAR should be immediately disqualified if he or she is determined, in accordance with the law, to have committed one of the following acts:

- advocates or supports “Hong Kong independence” ;
- refuses to recognize China’ s sovereignty over Hong Kong and its exercise of such sovereignty;

- seeks intervention by external forces in the affairs of Hong Kong;
- carries out other activities endangering national security;
- fails to meet the legal requirements and conditions of endorsing the Basic Law and pledging allegiance to the HKSAR.

The decision further defines the legal qualification of members of the Legislative Council and improves the relevant system and mechanism.

3. The Electoral System of Hong Kong Has Been Improved

On March 11, 2021, the Decision on Improving the Electoral System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region was adopted at the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC. The decision defines the basic principles and core elements for improving Hong Kong’ s electoral system, and authorizes the NPC Standing Committee to amend Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law.

On March 30, at its 27th Session, the 13th NPC Standing Committee unanimously passed the amended Annex I “Method for the Selection of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region” and Annex II “Method for the Formation of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Its Voting Procedures” . The amended Annex I and Annex II came into force on March 31, and the methods previously in force ceased to apply.

The Hong Kong government then implemented the decision and the amended Annex I and Annex II through local legislation. It proposed a bill on the amendment of local laws, including 8 principal laws and 24 subsidiary laws. On May 27, 2021, the Legislative Council passed the Improving Electoral System (Consolidated Amendments) Bill 2021, thus completing the improvements to Hong Kong's electoral system.

The improvements are underpinned by five major principles:

- Fully and faithfully implementing the policy of One Country, Two Systems, abiding by the Constitution, the Basic Law and the relevant decisions of the NPC, resolutely safeguarding China's sovereignty, security and development interests, resolutely opposing external interference, and maintaining enduring peace and order in Hong Kong;

- Fully implementing the principle of Hong Kong patriots governing Hong Kong, keeping the power to govern Hong Kong firmly in the hands of those who love the country, and ensuring the legitimate rights and interests of Hong Kong residents;

- Upholding the rule of law and its authority in Hong Kong, safeguarding the order established by the Constitution and the Basic Law, and holding to account anyone guilty of violating the law or undermining the rule of law;

- Making the Election Committee and the Legislative Council more representative, expanding balanced and orderly political participation, and safeguarding the overall and fundamental interests of Hong Kong;

- Improving coordination between the executive and the legislature, improving governance, and reducing political conflict and internal strife.

The improvements cover three areas:

First, the Election Committee has been restructured, with its membership enlarged, its sectors increased in number, its delimitation of sectors improved, and its functions enhanced.

- The membership of the Election Committee is increased from 1,200 to 1,500; the number of sectors increased from 4 to 5, with each comprising 300 members. The additional Fifth Sector is composed of Hong Kong deputies to the NPC, Hong Kong members of the CPPCC National Committee, and representatives of Hong Kong members of relevant national organizations. The term of office of the Election Committee is five years, and members of the Election Committee must be permanent Hong Kong residents.

- There are specific provisions concerning the delimitation and allocation of seats, and the formation of the 40 subsectors under the five sectors of the Election Committee, with the delimitation of sectors further improved. The three constituent groups that previously formed the Election Committee will continue to supply members – ex-officio members, validly nominated members, and validly elected members.

- The functions of the Election Committee have been improved and expanded: Its function of electing the Chief Executive designate from the list of nominations is retained; its function of electing some members of the

Legislative Council is restored; and its role in nominating candidates for the Legislative Council is added.

The restructured Election Committee has a wider social basis. It is more representative, with more balanced participation by all sectors of society. It thus better represents the overall and fundamental interests of Hong Kong as an international, pluralistic and highly-developed capitalist society, and it fully conforms to the constitutional status and realities of Hong Kong as a local administrative region under the direct jurisdiction of China's central government.

Second, provisions are made concerning the methods for the selection of the Chief Executive and the formation of the Legislative Council. The basic elements of the previous system for selecting the Chief Executive are retained, while the nomination mechanisms are adjusted to ensure that the Chief Executive must be a loyal patriot trusted by the central government. The priority is to reform the voting procedures of the Legislative Council so as to strike a better balance between the overall interests of Hong Kong society, the interests of individual sectors, and the interests of the various parts of Hong Kong. The number of members of the Legislative Council has increased from 70 to 90; of these, 40 members are returned by the Election Committee, 30 by functional constituencies, and 20 by geographical constituencies through direct election. There are specific provisions regarding the nomination of candidates for the Legislative Council, voter eligibility, and voting methods.

Third, the system of candidate eligibility review is improved. The Candidate Eligibility Review Committee is established, which is responsible for reviewing the eligibility of candidates for the Election Committee, nominees for the Chief Executive, and candidates for the Legislative Council. This is to ensure that the principle of Hong Kong patriots governing Hong Kong is fully implemented and that those who seek to overturn Hong Kong's constitutional order and destabilize Hong Kong are disbarred from participation in Hong Kong's government system.

On September 19, 2021, the polls closed in Hong Kong's 2021 Election Committee Subsector Election, the first major election held successfully under the improved electoral system.

Held on December 19, the elections for the Seventh Legislative Council were open, fair, secure and clean, representing another step forward for democracy in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's new electoral system has the following characteristics and strengths:

First, it is broadly representative. The new electoral system has attracted an impressive range of candidates from a diversity of backgrounds. Among them are representatives of business, academia and the professions, as well as workers, employees, and operators of small and medium-sized enterprises from the grassroots. They include natives of Hong Kong, residents from the mainland and Taiwan who have come to live and work in Hong Kong, and naturalized foreign residents. They range from political veterans to a new generation of young people full of energy and innovation. Ordinary people including residents from public housing and subdivided apartment complexes, bus drivers, and electricians are all likely candidates for the Legislative Council. This would never have happened in Hong Kong in the past.

Second, it is politically inclusive. Elections should reflect more than one voice. Candidates for the Legislative Council represent various political groups and interests from different points on the political spectrum, espousing different political philosophies, and aspiring to different goals. This shows clearly the open and inclusive nature of the new electoral system. Upholding the principle of loving the country and Hong Kong, the new electoral system has expanded the boundaries of political involvement in

line with the fundamental interests of Hong Kong: the sustained implementation of One Country, Two Systems, the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, and the pursuit of a better life for the people of Hong Kong.

Third, it ensures balanced participation. The new electoral system has optimized the composition of the Legislative Council by dividing membership among those returned by the Election Committee, by functional constituencies, and by geographical constituencies through direct elections. Participation of all social groups and all constituencies in the legislature ensures balanced political representation – diverse interests are thus taken into consideration. While ensuring the sound development of capitalism, the system conforms to Hong Kong’s realities and enables the Legislative Council to better represent the overall interests of Hong Kong, protect the interests of all social groups and geographical constituencies, and reflect public opinion in a more comprehensive way.

Fourth, it guarantees fair competition. All 90 seats in the Legislative Council elections were contested – the first time since Hong Kong’s return to China. The new electoral system attaches greater importance to the competence and quality of candidates, thus making election activities more rational, fair and orderly, and it addresses a higher level of attention to issues such as people’s lives and regional development. All candidates compete on the same platform, campaigning on their expertise, policies, ideas, contributions, and sense of responsibility.

Prior to the handover, the UK tried to impose elements of a fake Western-style democracy on Hong Kong. Since the handover, local agitators have created polarization and social disorder resulting in economic imbalance and ineffective regulation. None of this has ever helped Hong Kong residents to enjoy genuine democracy. The new electoral system has brought benign, rational, fair and clean competition back to elections, so that the true purpose of elections is achieved, to the greater benefit of the people of Hong Kong.

Obviously, Hong Kong ' s improved electoral system gives full expression to the policy of One Country, Two Systems and the Basic Law in line with Hong Kong ' s realities.

- It is based on the principle of One Country while respecting the differences between the Two Systems.

- It is guided by the principle of Hong Kong patriots governing Hong Kong; it closes the loopholes in the previous electoral system, and is open and inclusive.

- It ensures both extensive and balanced participation.

- It reinforces both electoral democracy and consultative democracy.

- It safeguards state authority and improves governance.

- It promotes good governance and upholds and realizes the democratic rights of the Hong Kong people.

The improved electoral system shows that democracy in Hong Kong is advancing with the times. This system ensures the sound long-term development of democracy in Hong Kong, and fosters favorable conditions necessary for the election by universal suffrage of the Chief Executive and

the Legislative Council.

According to the Constitution, the system of people's congresses is China's fundamental political system. The NPC is the highest organ of state power, and its permanent institution is the NPC Standing Committee. The NPC and its Standing Committee exercise the legislative power of the state, the power to decide on major issues, the power to appoint and remove top-level officials, and the power of oversight. The NPC Standing Committee has the power to interpret the Constitution and laws. The system of people's congresses provides a fundamental institutional safeguard for the policy of One Country, Two Systems.

Since the 1980s, the NPC and its Standing Committee have played a vital role in approving the Sino-British Joint Declaration, drafting and enacting the Basic Law, deciding on the establishment of the HKSAR, addressing complex political and legal issues in the transition period, and meeting new challenges encountered in the course of implementing the policy of One Country, Two Systems since Hong Kong's return to China.

In particular, in response to the 2019 turmoil, the NPC and its Standing Committee have fulfilled their constitutional responsibilities and made a series of sound and timely decisions – enacting the Hong Kong National Security Law, amending Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law, and improving Hong Kong's electoral system. The NPC and its Standing Committee have thus played a critical role in quelling riots and restoring order in Hong Kong. They have ensured that the development of democracy in Hong Kong will continue to make orderly progress, and that the policy of One Country, Two Systems and the Basic Law are fully and faithfully implemented and enforced.

By making all these efforts to develop and improve democracy in Hong Kong, the central government aims to ensure the success of the policy

of One Country, Two Systems, to enable the Hong Kong residents to better exercise their democratic rights, and to maintain Hong Kong's long-term stability and prosperity. The central government will continue to steer the course for the development of democracy in Hong Kong and support this endeavor, and it will continue to resolutely uphold the fundamental interests of all the people in Hong Kong.

VI. The Prospects Are Bright for Democracy in Hong Kong

The policy of One Country, Two Systems is the optimal solution to problems carried over from history. It is the best policy for sustaining prosperity and stability following Hong Kong's return, and it provides the fundamental safeguard for the development of democracy in Hong Kong. With more than 20 years of experience, the CPC and the Chinese government have gained a deeper and clearer understanding of how to develop democracy in accordance with the policy of One Country, Two Systems and in line with the realities in Hong Kong. We will continue to take more solid steps to advance democracy in the right direction with greater confidence.

1. The Principle of One Country, Two Systems Provides the Fundamental Guarantee for the Development of Democracy in HKSAR

The CPC created the One Country, Two Systems policy and has guided its development ever since. Upheld by the CPC and the Chinese government as a basic long-term policy, it has been confirmed by all the CPC National Congresses and other important meetings, and written into all major documents promulgated since the 1980s. It is also enshrined in the Constitution, and codified and institutionalized through the Basic Law. It has been fully and faithfully implemented in the decisions on Hong Kong made by the NPC and its Standing Committee, and in the interpretation of the Basic Law made by the NPC Standing Committee.

On November 11, 2021, at its Sixth Plenary Session, the 19th CPC Central Committee adopted the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century. One Country, Two Systems is included as one of the Party ' s important achievements and a major contributor to its experience. This is the first time that Hong Kong and Macao affairs, and One Country, Two Systems have been listed in such a momentous document.

To carry forward the policy of One Country, Two Systems in the new era, we must continue to abide by a set of key principles: Hong Kong governed by the people of Hong Kong, a high degree of autonomy for the region, upholding and improving the policy of One Country, Two Systems, Hong Kong governed in accordance with the law, and overall jurisdiction over Hong Kong by the central authorities. The legal systems and supporting mechanisms in the HKSAR must maintain national security, sovereignty and development interests, ensure overall social stability, and sustain lasting prosperity and stability. The principle of Hong Kong patriots governing Hong Kong must be implemented to consolidate the order established by the Constitution and the Basic Law. We should implement the policy of One Country and respect the differences of the Two Systems. We should ensure overall jurisdiction by the central authorities over Hong Kong and a high degree of autonomy in Hong Kong. The central authorities should continue to provide full support to Hong Kong, and Hong Kong, on its part, should improve its competitiveness. We should ensure that this policy will remain unchanged and that it is implemented faithfully. This is the fundamental guarantee for the development of democracy in the HKSAR.

– Gaining a full understanding of the relationship between One Country and Two Systems and faithfully applying this policy

One Country is the prerequisite and basis for the Two Systems, and

the Two Systems are subordinate to and derive from One Country. The socialist system practiced on the mainland, the main body of the country, and the capitalist system in Hong Kong, run in parallel. However, the fact that the latter is subordinate to the former is not to be challenged. Leadership by the CPC is the defining feature of Chinese socialism, and it is at the core of the order established by the Constitution. As such, it must be truly respected and upheld in Hong Kong.

We must foster a strong sense of One Country as a fundamental state policy. We must safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests, and take resolute action to prevent and stop external interference in the affairs of Hong Kong. Any activity that jeopardizes China's sovereignty and security, any activity that challenges the right of the central authorities and the authority of the Basic Law, and any infiltration or sabotage directed at the mainland via Hong Kong are in violation of the One Country policy and will not be tolerated. The more we adhere to the policy of One Country, the greater the scope there will be for Two Systems.

- Governing Hong Kong in strict accordance with the Constitution and the Basic Law

We must consolidate the base of the HKSAR underpinned by the Constitution and the Basic Law and uphold the order in Hong Kong decided by the Constitution and the Basic Law. These should be the overarching norms in handling the affairs of Hong Kong. We must consolidate the constitutional status of the Basic Law in Hong Kong's legal system, improve the legal system and mechanisms for enforcing the Basic Law, and ensure all its provisions are implemented and its authority is upheld.

- Properly handling the relationship between the central authorities and the HKSAR and ensuring both overall jurisdiction by the central authorities and a high degree of autonomy in Hong Kong

The central authorities have overall jurisdiction over the HKSAR, and the HKSAR enjoys a high degree of statutory autonomy. The HKSAR government is answerable to the central government and must implement the directives issued by the central government in accordance with the law. While exercising autonomy, the HKSAR government is under the supervision of the central government and is accountable to it. The HKSAR government should not exploit its high degree of autonomy to challenge or confront the exercise of relevant statutory powers by the central government. All central government departments and local governments should truly respect and uphold the statutory autonomy enjoyed by the HKSAR and not interfere in the affairs within the scope of its autonomy.

– Practicing the executive-led system with the Chief Executive at its core and supporting the Chief Executive and the HKSAR government in exercising law-based governance and efficiently performing their duties

We fully support the HKSAR government in exercising law-based governance under the leadership of the Chief Executive. We support the HKSAR executive, legislative and judicial branches in performing their statutory duties.

We support the HKSAR government in rallying all sectors of Hong Kong, in pursuing economic development, in taking effective steps to improve people's wellbeing, in firmly upholding the rule of law, in making gradual and orderly progress towards greater democracy, and in building a more inclusive and harmonious society.

We support the HKSAR government in actively responding to the need to advance social development, in meeting the new expectations of the Hong Kong people, and in solving the deep-rooted and acute problems influencing Hong Kong's economic and social development and its

long-term peace and stability. We support the HKSAR government in improving its governance capacity and performance.

- Integrating Hong Kong into China ' s overall development and supporting Hong Kong in extensive exchanges and cooperation with other countries and areas

We support Hong Kong in defining its development strategy within the national development strategy and in contributing to the national effort to open up and build a modern economy. We support Hong Kong in playing its part in the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, in creating a platform for the Belt and Road Initiative, and in tapping into its strengths to realize coordinated development with other parts of the country.

We support Hong Kong in continuing to be a separate customs territory and a free port, in strengthening global exchanges and cooperation, in consolidating its international status as a financial, shipping and trade center and an aviation hub, and in boosting its role as a global center for offshore Renminbi business and asset and risk management.

We support Hong Kong in building itself into an international center of innovation and technology, an international legal and dispute resolution services center in the Asia-Pacific Region, a regional center of intellectual property trade, and a center of cultural and art exchanges between China and other countries.

From the outset, when it adopted the policy of One Country, Two Systems, the Chinese government attached great importance to protecting the legitimate interests of foreign investors in Hong Kong. It made clear then that Hong Kong may establish mutually beneficial business ties with

the UK and other countries and that due regard would be given to their legitimate economic interests in Hong Kong. More detailed provisions in this regard are laid out in the Basic Law and local laws, which give comprehensive and equal protection to the legitimate interests of investors from around the world. The Chinese government is ready to share with all other countries the gains of reform and opening up through Hong Kong, an international financial, business and trade center.

The CPC and the Chinese government are committed to the principle of One Country, Two Systems, and to building a high-quality democracy conforming to the realities of Hong Kong.

2. Remaining Committed to the Principle of Hong Kong Patriots Governing Hong Kong

To ensure that One Country, Two Systems will make steady progress, and to further the development of democracy in Hong Kong, we must remain committed to the principle that Hong Kong is governed by Hong Kong patriots. This is a principle that has a fundamental bearing on China's national sovereignty, security and development interests, and on the sustained prosperity and stability in Hong Kong.

Loving one's country is a basic requirement for anyone engaged in state governance. Patriots governing their country is a universal practice around the world. Hong Kong governed by the patriots of Hong Kong is essential to the One Country, Two Systems principle, and quintessential to democracy in the region. To develop democracy in Hong Kong in the new era, the region must be governed by patriots and patriots only. No instigator of disorder should be allowed into the governing body of the HKSAR, and resolute measures must be taken to guard the region's administration against destabilizing influences and the forces behind them. The governance of the HKSAR must be secure.

The criteria for a patriot are objective and clear. A patriot is one who respects the Chinese nation, sincerely supports the motherland's resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong, and wishes in no way to impair Hong Kong's prosperity and stability. Now that Hong Kong has returned to China and has been reincorporated into the national governance system, a patriot is required to safeguard China's national sovereignty, security and development interests, respect and uphold the order established by the Constitution and the Basic Law, and work for prosperity and stability in Hong Kong.

Any Hong Kong residents can stand for election and participate in governing Hong Kong in accordance with the law, as long as they love the country and Hong Kong, and are not involved in activities that undermine national sovereignty, security and development interests, or jeopardize Hong Kong's prosperity and stability. Those who take the opposite view will be disqualified from governance.

Having Hong Kong patriots govern Hong Kong does not exclude people with different political views or ideas, nor will criticism of the government be suppressed. Democracy in the HKSAR allows ample room for different opinions and political groups, and there will be a plurality of voices in the government. All those who love the country and Hong Kong should stand together to form the most extensive united front, and expand it and make it more inclusive under the One Country, Two Systems framework.

The central government and the HKSAR government will continue to improve the system for selecting and cultivating patriotic individuals for Hong Kong's governance, promoting the upright and competent, and ensuring more patriots participate in Hong Kong's governance.

3. Developing Democracy in Line with Hong Kong' s Realities

There is no single set of criteria for democracy and no single model of democracy that is universally acceptable. Democracy works only when it suits actual conditions and solves actual problems. The social and political crises and turbulence in some countries and regions in recent years are evidence that there is no perfect democracy anywhere in the world. Disregarding the reality of one' s own country and blindly copying the systems of others often causes chaos and brings disaster to the people.

The political system of the HKSAR applies locally. This is determined by the region' s constitutional status under the One Country, Two Systems framework and by its actual conditions. Therefore, the system of democracy in Hong Kong should not be a replica of some other model. Rather, a path to democracy in Hong Kong should be explored under the policy of One Country, Two Systems and the Basic Law and in keeping with its political, economic, social, cultural and historical conditions.

- Democracy in Hong Kong should be guided by the central authorities and make steady progress in accordance with the law

The central authorities have the final say in determining the system of democracy in the HKSAR, which is a matter of national sovereignty and security, a reflection of the nature of relationship between the central authorities and the HKSAR, and one that affects the region' s long-term peace, stability and prosperity. Only under central guidance can Hong Kong expect its democracy to make healthy progress. The central authorities exercise their constitutional power by law, and the NPC and its Standing Committee revise and improve the electoral system in the HKSAR, according to a process that is fair, just, lawful and constitutional. This is the path along which democracy should progress in Hong Kong. Any system of democracy takes time to form and proceeds in stages. These stages are more

than simply quantitative units; they should also be measured against quality.

- The constitutional order must be consolidated to safeguard national security

In developing democracy in Hong Kong, it is imperative to consolidate the order established by the Constitution and the Basic Law and ensure Hong Kong's constitutional status as stipulated in the Basic Law:

“The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China.” “The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be a local administrative region of the People's Republic of China, which shall enjoy a high degree of autonomy and come directly under the Central People's Government.” National security is the prerequisite for peace and democracy in Hong Kong. Without national security, there would be no stability in Hong Kong, and no prospects of implementing democracy. The key issue that has emerged in the course of developing democracy in Hong Kong over the past two decades is not whether Hong Kong should pursue democracy. Rather, it is an issue of upholding the One Country principle and opposing separatism, subversion and intervention. Safeguarding national security must be a focus in developing democracy in Hong Kong, and all latent threats and risks that could undermine national security must be neutralized.

- The executive-led system should be implemented to ensure good governance

In developing democracy in Hong Kong, it is imperative to implement the executive-led system and consolidate the Chief Executive's core position and authority in the region's governance. There should be strong and steady support for the Chief Executive and the HKSAR government in the Legislative Council to end the long-standing conflict between the legislature and the executive and resolve the internal strife

within the Legislative Council. This will enable Hong Kong and its government to focus on economic development, improve people's lives, and boost Hong Kong's strengths in the face of fierce international competition.

- There should be balanced participation in governance, and Hong Kong should remain open and pluralistic

Under the One Country, Two Systems framework, Hong Kong will maintain its capitalist economic model and way of life for a long period of time. Development of democracy in Hong Kong must be conducive to economic development under capitalism, and the interests of all social groups, sectors and stakeholders should be protected by law. A broadly based mechanism of public representation should be formed to advance balanced political participation. Development of democracy in Hong Kong should help the region to integrate into the broader framework of national development, and keep it highly open, as the common home of both Chinese and foreign residents who work and live here, and a destination of opportunity for entrepreneurs and investors from around the world.

- The rule of law will be upheld to protect personal rights and freedoms

In developing and improving democracy in Hong Kong, it is imperative to follow the rule of law in accordance with the Constitution and the Basic Law. Any proposition or act that is incompatible with the Constitution, the Basic Law, and the relevant decisions of the NPC and its Standing Committee goes against the principle of rule of law and undermines its authority. Development of democracy in Hong Kong should protect the people's rights and freedoms provided for in the Constitution and the Basic Law, and it should ensure that they enjoy these rights and freedoms and exercise them. These include freedom of speech, the press and

publication, freedom of association, assembly, procession and demonstration, the right to vote and stand for election, and the right and freedom to organize and join trade unions and strikes.

- Democracy should be promoted in many forms

Democracy comes in many forms. It cannot be reduced to the simplistic question of whether there are elections, and elections themselves cannot be defined exclusively as direct elections. Nor can progress in democracy be defined only as more representation from direct elections. What matters is whether public representation is expanding and whether the fundamental interests and the common will of the people are faithfully represented. For democracy to develop in Hong Kong, measures should be taken to improve the electoral system, and more forms of democracy – consultation, inquiry, hearing and dialogue – should be tested, to open up more channels for democracy of quality and substance.

- The economy will be boosted for the greater benefit of the people of Hong Kong

Democracy should progress side by side with the economy and society. The main criterion for evaluating any form of democracy should always be whether it allows the whole of the population to prosper. Only those models that continue to improve overall wellbeing are good; those that undermine the economy and the lives of the people are not. The central government is determined to promote the development of democracy in the HKSAR in line with the region's realities, in ways that will help generate high-quality economic growth and improve quality of life. It is intended that this will also be a practical means of addressing the most troublesome and long-standing problems that beset Hong Kong society, so that economic and social progress will benefit every local resident in a fairer way, and that Hong Kong will maintain its status as an international financial, shipping

and trade center. This will ensure lasting prosperity and stability in Hong Kong, enabling it to play a more prominent part in national rejuvenation. Quality economic and social development in Hong Kong will also prepare the region for further democratic progress.

The central government will continue to develop and improve democracy in Hong Kong in line with its realities and in accordance with the Constitution, the Basic Law, and the relevant decisions of the NPC and its Standing Committee. It will work with all social groups, sectors and stakeholders towards the ultimate goal of election by universal suffrage of the Chief Executive and all members of the Legislative Council. Under the framework of One Country, Two Systems, the prospects are bright for democracy in Hong Kong.

Conclusion

The people of China have always yearned for democracy, and the CPC has always stayed true to the mission of delivering their dream. Over the past century, the CPC has led the Chinese people on a long and arduous journey to establish a model of democracy with Chinese characteristics, and it has enabled 1.4 billion Chinese, one fifth of world population, to run their own country with extensive and substantive democratic rights. Their satisfaction with the results proves that this effort has borne fruit.

The CPC puts the people first, serves the public good, and exercises power in the interests of the people. It ensures that the Party exercises leadership, the people run their country, and governance is based in law. Through systemic and institutional improvements, it has championed whole-process people's democracy in China, and this has laid the groundwork for developing democracy in Hong Kong under the framework of One Country, Two Systems.

The policy is a creative innovation of the CPC and the Chinese government. Robust and resilient, it has proved to be a great success in Hong Kong. With their political vision, the CPC and the Chinese government are certain of the long-term success of the socialist system on the mainland. They are equally certain of the long-term success of both the capitalist system in Hong Kong and a form of democracy suited to its realities.

Hong Kong is entering a new stage of restored order, a thriving society, and further prosperity. With the Hong Kong National Security Law coming into force, and with improvements to the electoral system, governance by patriots will be further strengthened, the rule of law and the business environment will continue to improve, and Hong Kong will become a more harmonious society. This will create the conditions required to effectively resolve long-standing and deep-seated problems in the region.

Rooted in the motherland, and buttressed by democracy and the rule of law, a free and inclusive Hong Kong will continue to prosper, to enjoy enduring stability and harmony, and to open itself to the world. The policy of One Country, Two Systems will be a resounding success story in Hong Kong, and this dynamic region will continue to prosper.