

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

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting this morning (December 10):

Reporter: Good morning, Mrs Lam. Will your administration give a complete commitment that the new District Councillors will receive equal treatment, responsiveness and access from your government as their predecessors did? Will you make that promise to them today? And second, after the huge election turnout and protest on Sunday, will you admit that there is no silent majority behind you?

Chief Executive: First of all, the roles and functions of District Councils are clearly laid down in the District Councils Ordinance. The resources made available to the District Councils for organising local activities, for developing minor projects in the districts are also approved by the Legislative Council. There is no question of the Government's commitment to continue to respect the roles and functions of the District Councils and to continue to make available the funds for the District Councils to approve and disburse according to their remit of these resources. I would say that a quid pro quo, we would also expect the new District Council members to respect the conventions and the rules that have been established over the years in full consultation with the district. So there is no worry that we will not accord the same treatment and respect to the new District Councils after January 1 next year.

As far as the protest on Sunday, first of all I take comfort that given the Letter of No Objection issued by the Police, and co-operation by all sectors, we have seen a relatively calm and peaceful protest on Sunday. This reflects the freedoms that Hong Kong people are enjoying and I hope that this phenomenon will also go abroad to show that Hong Kong is upholding all the rights and freedoms of Hong Kong people. All those accusations from various quarters that we are eroding people's freedoms are unsubstantiated.

As far as response is concerned, I have explained on various occasions that the most positive response that we have given regarding this social unrest is the complete withdrawal of the Bill after confrontation in Legislative Council on June 12. As for other demands, we really have to stick by certain important principles. If a particular demand requires us to deviate from the law, not to uphold the rule of law in Hong Kong or to do things actually beyond the powers of the Chief Executive, I could not agree to accept those demands simply for the purpose of meeting people's aspirations because there will be other people who have the aspirations that the Hong Kong SAR Government should uphold the rule of law and should stay

impartial and just in dealing with all sorts of demands put up by the people. That remains the position of the Hong Kong SAR Government.

Reporter: A few English questions. First, Mrs Lam, you have introduced the monthly short Q&A sessions at LegCo to improve ties with lawmakers. What would you say to people who accuse you of not caring about that anymore, and are you that scared of facing lawmakers' questions or protests in LegCo? Second question, you will soon have your duty visit to Beijing. Will Article 23 national security legislation be part of that discussion, and will the public expect a change to your cabinet before the end of the year or before Christmas? Thank you.

Chief Executive: About my appearance in the Legislative Council, since the beginning of my term, I have attached importance to the relationship between the Executive and the Legislature. On top of the regular Q&A sessions which take place once every quarter in the legislative year, I have initiated, with the support of the Legislative Council President, to do this monthly questioning time lasting for about 30 minutes on each occasion. The problem that I'm facing is, these days, as proven by the two occasions in October, almost whenever I step into the Legislative Council building and the Chamber, there would be disruptions to the proceedings and perhaps also undermining the order in the Legislative Council. So, I told myself that perhaps I should give another trial in attending the regular Q&A session in January, and if that goes relatively smoothly, of course I'm happy to resume the practice of doing short Q&A or short questioning time with the Legislative Council. There is no doubt that, as the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), I need to lead the Executive to work closely with the Legislative Council because Legislative Council plays a very important statutory role in scrutinising the Government's business, in approving our legislative proposals and also in supporting our funding requests. This is something for the time being, sort of, because I don't want to cause more disruptions and security risks and concerns to colleagues in the Legislative Council Secretariat.

The second question about my duty visit. Yes, I'll be departing Hong Kong for Beijing this Saturday to do my regular reporting of duty to the leaders in Beijing. Of course the purpose of the duty visit is to give a full account of what has happened in Hong Kong over the past year, what the Government had been doing, what more the Government wants to do in the coming year and what policy measures that the Hong Kong SAR needs from the Central Government in taking forward some of our major initiatives, particularly with the two national strategies of the Belt and Road and the Greater Bay Area development. On this same occasion, I would do exactly the same, particularly what has happened in Hong Kong in the last six months.

From time to time, in the last few months, there have always been speculations and rumours about reshuffling of my team including the Principal Officials and maybe also including the Executive Council. My first priority now is really to restore law and order in Hong Kong and to ensure that Hong Kong could continue to move ahead both economically and socially. So this is not an immediate task that I would accord a lot of attention to. I hope that

all these rumours and speculations will not spread further because these are not very helpful speculations.

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