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China Issues White Paper on Development of Democracy in Hong Kong

China's State Council Information Office on Dec 20, 2021 issued a white paper titled "Hong Kong: Democratic Progress Under the Framework of One Country, Two Systems."

The white paper presented a comprehensive review of the origin and development of principles and position of the central government on democracy in Hong Kong. The following are the main contents of the white paper.

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

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. 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 British government repeatedly rejected all calls for democratic reform in Hong Kong. The sudden interest of the British government in "electoral reform" at the end of the colonial rule revealed its ulterior motives: 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.



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

After resuming the exercise of sovereignty on 1 July 1997, the Chinese government implemented the basic policy of "One Country, Two Systems" and established democracy in the HKSAR. China's Constitution and the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) have been the foundations underpinning the Chinese government's governance of the region. 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. The Basic Law embodies the principle of Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong, with patriots at the core. The Basic Law grants extensive democratic rights and freedoms to Hong Kong residents. 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.

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 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. 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. 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. 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. China will continue to take more solid steps to advance democracy in the right direction with greater confidence. 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.

Please see the attachment for the full text of the document:

http://www.news.cn/english/2021-12/20/c_1310383195.htm

