



## **CALD Statement No. 5 S. 2014**

### **CALD Statement Reiterating its Strongest Support for Full Universal Suffrage in Hong Kong**

The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), whose Executive Committee convened yesterday in Hong Kong, reiterates its strongest support for full, universal suffrage in Hong Kong. After careful consideration of the views from all sides of the political spectrum, CALD is convinced that the demand of the "Umbrella Movement" for genuine choices of candidates in the election of the Chief Executive in 2017 and beyond is not only morally justified, but also legally grounded.

In the course of our meetings in Hong Kong, both with the government and the opposition, it became clear to us that the main bone of contention is the conflicting interpretation of Article 45 (2) of Hong Kong's Basic Law, which stipulates that, "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." For government officials, this provision is crystal clear about the powers of the nominating committee in screening the candidates for Chief Executive elections. The opposition, on the other hand, emphasizes the section's endorsement of "universal suffrage" and "democratic procedures."

CALD strongly believes that the presence of a Nominating Committee which is not "broadly representative" and keen on screening out candidates "unacceptable" to the Mainland violates the very essence of universal suffrage. Universal suffrage not only entails that everyone, provided they meet certain minimum requirements, should

have the right to vote - it also demands genuine choices of candidates. If the Nominating Committee were constituted in such a way as presently decided by Beijing that its accountability would not lie with the Hong Kong people but with Beijing, then their right to universal suffrage would undoubtedly be severely restricted. In the final analysis, this could not be considered to be universal suffrage at all.

The experiences of many CALD member-parties prove that sham democracies are the most difficult to fight, as they can cloak their authoritarian ways with democratic procedures. From Singapore to Cambodia, the so-called “democratic” institutions and processes have been used and abused to legitimize authoritarian regimes. We should not let ourselves fall into this trap in the case of Hong Kong. It is time for liberals and democrats to “walk the talk” and speak out against attempts to undermine freedom and democracy, regardless of what the consequences will be.

After all, the unfolding story of Hong Kong is the story of all of us. At one point in our development as democratic nations - we too have struggled for free and fair elections, we too have called for universal suffrage, we too have demanded our right to chart our own destiny as a people. That is why what is happening here in Hong Kong resonates with all of us. The call for genuine, universal suffrage goes with our very nature as human beings – we all desire to have a free choice.

For the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats:

Oyun Sanjaasuren  
Chairperson

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