CALD Statement No. 1 S. 2018

**Hong Kong's civil liberties under threat, creates chilling effect
as Umbrella Movement leaders face trial**

The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), an alliance of liberal and democratic political parties in Asia, convened its General Assembly today, 19 November 2018, in Bangkok, Thailand. Liberals from Asia and across the globe discussed challenges that impact democratic institutions and processes and explored steps to combat the rise of populism, illiberalism, and authoritarianism.

During the discussions, CALD members expressed concern on the crackdown against pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong.

Today, the trial begins for nine pro-democracy leaders who were charged on 27 March 2017 with vague offenses of "inciting public nuisance" and "inciting people to incite others to cause public nuisance." The leaders, who were involved in the peaceful Umbrella Movement in 2014, come from the groups: Occupying Central movement trio, Hong Kong Federation of Students, Scholarism, League of Social Democrats, the Civic Party, the Democratic Party, including Members of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong.

CALD is aware that the leaders were arrested and charged two and a half years after Occupy Central and Umbrella Movement ended and could face a maximum of seven year's imprisonment.

CALD is deeply concerned on the curtailment of freedom of expression in Hong Kong and the continuing political persecution under the guise of legal charges against people involved in peaceful demonstrations.

CALD is calling on the Hong Kong government to drop the charges and respect freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. CALD stands firm with all democracy advocates in Asia and the world in defending liberal values and freedom despite the growing threats to freedom and democracy.

For the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats:

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