



1 October 2019

The Honourable Rick Scott
Senate
716 Hart Senate Office
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr Scott,

Thank you for being a staunch supporter and a loyal friend of Hong Kong. I appreciate that you have been watching with great care and concern the situation in Hong Kong.

As you examine US policy toward our city, I wish to take the opportunity, at this delicate juncture, to reiterate the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSARG)'s firm commitment to implementing the "one country, two systems" principle faithfully and to exercise "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" and a high degree of autonomy. I would like to appeal to your appreciation of the adverse effects that any disruptive US legislative and/or policy change could bring to Hong Kong.

The social unrest over the past three months in Hong Kong was triggered by my Government's proposed Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 (the Bill) which aimed at addressing the shortcomings of existing mechanisms for the surrender of fugitive criminals. I have publicly acknowledged our deficiencies in promoting the Bill and handling the legislative exercise and suspended all legislative work on 15 June 2019.

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We are eager to restore calm and rebuild trust within the community and I believe conversation will triumph over conflict. To help create the atmosphere necessary for the community dialogues, I announced on 4 September 2019 that the HKSARG will formally withdraw the Bill when our Legislative Council resumes. It has been our hope that my decision to formally withdraw the Bill would fully allay public concerns, as well as the concerns of the international community. Despite that, it is obvious that the discontentment in our society extends well-beyond the Bill; it encompasses political, economic and social issues. My decision to withdraw the Bill is one of the four actions announced to address these issues and move the society forward.

My Government will fully support the work of the Independent Police Complaints Council, an independent body set up by law which has undertaken a study on Police's handling of recent public order events. The Council is supported by a panel of internationally prominent experts from the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The findings of the study and recommendations of the Council will be made public in due course.

I and my Principal Officials have begun concerted efforts to engage in sincere dialogue with people from all walks of life – regardless of background or political views – to hear their views and grievances.

My Government will also invite community leaders, professionals and academics to independently examine and better understand the deep-rooted issues and concerns in our society. They will then advise the Government on finding solutions.

I wish to assure you that the HKSARG treasures Hong Kong's cherished fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. Human rights, freedom, the rule of law and an independent judiciary are the core values of Hong Kong. They are firmly anchored in the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, which is our constitutional document, as well as in the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and other legislation. Furthermore, the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as applied to Hong Kong continue to remain in force. These core values and our high degree of autonomy are the cornerstone of Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability. It is therefore in our own interest to safeguard them and we are doing so in a robust manner.

The US has long seen Hong Kong – with our aforementioned core values and free-market credentials – as a model for the region. These attributes form the basis of America’s vital economic foothold in our city. The fundamentals and institutional strengths of Hong Kong remain strong despite the current turmoil.

In the past two decades, the US policy toward Hong Kong – as underpinned by the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 – has been reassuring Americans, as well as the local and international communities, that the US resolutely supports Hong Kong. Current US policy toward Hong Kong safeguards not only mutually beneficial trade and exchanges with the US – here I am talking not only about the US’ aggregate merchandise trade surplus over Hong Kong amounting to US \$297 billion over the past decade – the highest consistently with Hong Kong globally, but also the interests of our sizable American community, including nearly 1 400 American firms and 85 000 American citizens. Furthermore, Hong Kong continues to be a responsible and essential partner of the US in such areas as counter-terrorism, anti-money laundering, anti-drug trafficking and strategic trade controls.

Beyond commercial interests, we fully recognise the people’s aspirations for democratic development. Since Hong Kong’s return to China, concrete and significant progress has been made on democracy. Notably, universal suffrage of “one person, one vote” for selecting the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and electing all Legislative Council members has been established as the ultimate aim for Hong Kong. This is enshrined in the Basic Law, not the Sino-British Joint Declaration. We are fully committed to achieving this goal, within our legal framework, through creating an atmosphere that is conducive to mutual trust and without further polarising society.

While fully respecting the prerogative of Congress, I am deeply worried that passage of the proposed Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act (Hong Kong Bill) with the effect of amending the Policy Act would go against its original spirit by unintentionally undermining confidence in Hong Kong as an international commercial hub. It would also introduce persistent uncertainty in our business and investment climate which risks not only endangering our local economy but also weakening valued US economic and trade relations. With its sanctions, I am afraid that passage of the Hong Kong Bill would inadvertently send out a wrong signal that bilateral relations between Hong Kong and the US, which have all along been mutually beneficial and co-operative, have been adversely affected.

Months of protests have taken a toll on our city. Having the US, our second largest trading partner, introduce additional economic uncertainty to our economy is not the most effective way to address our societal challenges. While it is certainly not the US's intent to see Hong Kong harmed, I fear that Hong Kong society and overseas business interests here risk becoming collateral damage with the passage of the Hong Kong Bill.

I understand your care for autonomy, human rights and freedom in Hong Kong. Let me assure you that my Government will continue to safeguard them in a vigorous manner. Indeed, with or without the Hong Kong Bill, we will continue to faithfully discharge this constitutional duty.

The US has played an invaluable role in sustaining global confidence in Hong Kong and contributing to our city's prosperity which is mutually beneficial. It is my earnest wish that the HKSARG would have your full support in seeking to uphold intact the US policy toward Hong Kong as laid down under the Policy Act despite these legislative challenges, and that the US will continue to accord to Hong Kong separate status in accordance with the Policy Act. For I believe that reaffirming Hong Kong's special status with the US, as embodied by the spirit of the Policy Act, will best safeguard the qualities of Hong Kong that the US holds dear, as well as the substantial trade and commercial interests of the US in Hong Kong, and through Hong Kong, in the region.

Yours sincerely,



(Mrs Carrie Lam)
Chief Executive

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
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