Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region SAR. 1st and 2nd annual reports

1999/2009(COS) - 26/10/2000 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The Parliament adopted, by 239 to 4 with 18 abstentions, the resolution drafted by Mr John CUSHNAHAN (EPP/ED, Ireland) on the Commission's first and second annual reports on the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong. However, this resolution was adopted subject to amendments. Firstly, it should emphasised that the Parliament welcomes the developing relationship between itself and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Legislative Council. However, it urges reform of Hong Kong's political institutions and regrets the abolition of the Municipal Council on 1 January 2000. Moreover, due to a low voter turnout for the recent elections, there is a call for the introduction of universal suffrage for both the Council and the Chief Executive at the earliest possible opportunity. The Parliament believes that the sharp decline was due to voter disillusionment as a result of the legislature's lack of real power and ability to influence the executive plus the undemocratic nature of the election system for the Legislative Council. There is concern about the implications for the right of jurisdiction of the Hong Kong Courts of the Cheung Tze-Keung ("Big Spender") and Li Yuhai cases. Therefore, the Parliament calls for a formal agreement on the mutual rendition of criminal suspects between the mainland and Hong Kong to be put in place at the earliest opportunity. Furthermore, a statutory Human Rights Commission should be set up with a view to investigating complaints of human rights abuses, with early introduction of Racial Discrimination Ordinance. With regard to press censorship, the Parliament deplores the attempt by the Central People's Government officals to interfere with the freedom of the press by encouraging self-censorship. In relation to the economy, Hong Kong is praised for its excellent economic performance, however, there is concern at the possible deterioration of working conditions in Hong Kong, particularly for migrant workers and the Parliament calls for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. Furthermore, Commissioner Chris Patten, stressed that Hong Kong remained one of the freest societies in Asia and a successful world class economy, but the economy depends on 'a free press, an independent judiciary, a first class public service and a zero tolerance of corruption.