

**INTERVENTION BY MERLENE EMERSON, LIB DEMS OVERSEAS AND CHINESE LIB DEMS**

Conference,

I would like to speak in support of the amendment originally proposed by Christopher, our Lib Dem Overseas member in HK.

HKers are in Chris's words simply "trying to get common sense back into their lives". They are brave enough to put themselves in harm's way even as peaceful protestors; at risk of being detained without charge and now life imprisonment under the new National Security Law.

It is the ambiguity, breadth and extra territoriality of the new legislation that raise concerns. Under Article 38, the law may apply to "a person who is not a permanent resident of the Region." In other words, you and me.

Nearly 3 million HKers voted last November in the local District Council elections. Pro democracy candidates won 389 out of 452 contested seats. We regret that Legislative Council elections due to have been held earlier this month on 6 September have since been postponed for a year. Was it due to Covid19 health concerns or was it from a fear that the HK people may once again choose pro-democracy candidates over pro-Beijing ones?

We have therefore in our amendment called for the UK Government to monitor the impact of the new National Security Law on the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Joint Declaration. And to use what influence it has (admittedly this may not account for much) to persuade the HK government to hold legitimate Legislative Council elections as soon as possible.

I realise that, like Brexit in the UK, not everyone in HK shares the same views about their future. There is indeed a fork in the road. Many would prefer to remain in HK. But over 120,000 applied for renewal of their BNO passports last year, and there may well be more this year. This gives them the right to come to the UK to settle after 5 years of residency where they will have to be supporting themselves. And there are still many questions which remain unclear such as the rights of the young people born after 1997.

Christopher had kindly thanked the Liberal Democrats for our support for the HK people.

We are of course not advocating HK independence, subversion nor terrorism. Joining Lib Dems for HKers is not collusion with an external power. We recognise that sovereignty of HK has passed to China but that "1 country 2 systems" has another 27 years to run its course.

It is more important today than ever before, that UK and China comply with our treaty obligations in a rules-based, and increasingly multi-polar world.

Conference. Please support our amendment and the motion as a whole. Thank you.