

Let's join hands to make our children grow up in a society that respects their rights!

By fax and by mail
(2509 0577)

The Hon Donald TSANG Yam-kuen, GBS, JP
Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region People's Republic of China
5/F, Central Government Office
Main Wing, Lower Albert Road
Hong Kong

Dear Mr Tsang

A Children's Commission for the present and future of Hong Kong

Two years have passed since we first wrote to you before you delivered the first policy speech in October 2005. Hong Kong has been going through a lot of changes, ups and downs in the social, economic and political aspects. We thank you and your colleagues for the dedicated efforts in keeping the HKSAR as a competitive society. Nevertheless, we wish to see the same pace and commitment of the government to cultivate a welcoming environment for our next generation. We are talking about our repeated calls for the setting up of an effective Children's Commission to champion for the rights and needs of 1.3 million children in Hong Kong, so as to embrace the best international practices that have been advocated by the United Nations with priority.

Before you will deliver the third policy speech in October 2007, we, the Alliance for Children's Commission once again seeks to represent the interests of a seemingly invisible group in the community, our children. This letter is being copied to the three Secretaries and 12 bureau chiefs of your Cabinet, Central Policy Unit as well as all Legislative Councilors of the HKSAR Government.

We particularly wish to draw your attention to the motion "That this Council urges the Government to set up a Commission on Children to fulfill the obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, safeguard the well-being of children, and ensure that children's perspectives are fully taken into account in the process of formulating government policies" that was being passed by the Legislative Council on 8 June 2007 with unanimous votes from all the attending legislators. More than 20 legislators across various political parties spoke to support the motion.¹ We believe the signal was clear and strong enough to draw necessary attention from the HKSAR Government.

¹ Minutes of the Legislative Council Meeting on 8 June 2007, page 478-521

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/chinese/counmtg/floor/cm0608-confirm-ec.pdf>

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In your 2006 policy speech, you proposed to set up a Family Commission and emphasized that family harmony is the foundation of social harmony. We believe you would address this issue again in your coming policy speech after one year's study by the Steering Committee on Study of Family Commission. We have no reservation that cherishing the family is a core value of our community and family harmony is crucial to the harmony of the society. However, we wish to stress that Family Commission and Children's Commission could not be replaced or overshadowed with one another, at the same time, they are not mutually exclusive. Each of them has its specific functions. We agree that children are also members of a family, however their needs are unique because of their less mature physical and mental development. They need special attention and care! For every new policy introduced, a family impact assessment will surely bring out different issues from a child impact assessment. We risk submerging the voice of the child with other louder voices and interests of the more senior members of the family. We believe an effective Children's Commission will put the interests of children in focus and will improve their well being in all areas.

Support for such a Children's Commission has been growing in recent years among NGOs, academics, professionals and children themselves. We, as the Third Party, have used various platforms to negotiate with the Government for more than a decade in the most logical and sensible ways by generating studies², drawing overseas references and consolidating views from children and professionals of various sectors. We would be very happy to partner with the government to discuss, explore and invest our resources to make this Commission come true.

As you have begun to solicit views from the community before your third policy speech to shape policy direction for the HKSAR, we would like to take this opportunity to invite you and your colleagues for a meeting to discuss on the issue directly. For your better understanding of our position, attached please find our joint statement that has received wide support in the community. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us through Ms Billy Wong of the Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights at 2324 9782 or hkccr8@childrenrights.org.hk to contact us.

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

This letter is co-signed by the organizations and professional groups that have committed to promote the establishment of a Children's Commission in Hong Kong.

Alliance for Children's Commission

27 August 2007

² *A Children's Commission for Hong Kong – Shaping the Future* published in December 2006

http://www.childrenrights.org.hk/A_Full_report.pdf

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ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN'S COMMISSION

爭取成立兒童事務委員會聯盟

The Alliance for Children's Commission is formed by 25 agencies and professional groups, which have committed themselves to promote the establishment of a Children's Commission in Hong Kong. They include:

爭取成立兒童事務委員會聯盟由 25 個組織及專業團體組成，承諾致力推動在香港成立兒童事務委員會，他們包括：

Against Child Abuse 防止虐待兒童會

Center for Child Development, Hong Kong Baptist University 香港浸會大學兒童發展研究中心

Children Rights Association 兒童權利關注會

Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong – Hin Keng Centre 香港中華基督教青年會 – 顯徑會所

Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong – Tsuen Wan Centre 香港中華基督教青年會 – 荃灣會所

Dr Fernando Cheung's office 立法會張超雄議員辦事處

Dr Kwok Ka Ki's office 立法會郭家麒議員辦事處

ELCHK – Grace Rehabilitation Service 基督教香港信義會 – 天恩展能服務

ELCHK – Uncle Long Legs' Letter Box 基督教香港信義會 – 長腿叔叔信箱

The Hong Kong Childhood Injury Prevention and Research Association 香港兒童安全促進會

Hong Kong College of Paediatrician 香港兒科醫學院

Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF 聯合國兒童基金會

Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights 香港兒童權利委員會

Hong Kong Council of Early Childhood Education and Services 香港幼兒教育及服務聯會

Hong Kong Down Syndrome Association 香港唐氏綜合症協會

Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor 香港人權監察

229th Hong Kong Scout Group 香港童軍 229 旅

Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children 香港保護兒童會

Kids' Dream 童夢同想

Playright Children's Play Association 智樂兒童遊樂協會

Society for Community Organization 香港社區組織協會

Suen Mei Speech & Hearing Centre 宣美語言及聽覺訓練中心

The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong 香港小童群益會

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service 香港社會服務聯會

TREATS 親切