Statement to support the establishment of a Commission for Children in Hong Kong

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) came into effect in Hong Kong in 1994. It is the obligation of the HKSAR Government to implement the rights mentioned in the Convention for the 1.3 million children aged under 18 in the territory. At present, we have many bureaux that are responsible for children. However, there is no single bureau that has children as its main focus and to ensure that the public authorities translate the principles enshrined in the UNCRC into reality. Without such a commitment, children and their rights continue to languish at the bottom of the political agenda.

It is a global trend to establish a Children’s Commission or Children’s Ombudsman in order to take care of the specific needs of children. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and the newly formed United Nations Human Rights Council advocated that such body should be set up as a matter of priority. In 2005, a total of 20 agencies and professional groups submitted a shadow report to reflect the child rights situation in Hong Kong (NGO Report of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region under the Convention on the Rights of the Child). They called on the government to set up a Children’s Commission with the appropriate power and resources to carry out its functions at the earliest time possible. In the Concluding Observations, the UN Committee strongly recommended that our government to establish such a body to improve the child rights situation in Hong Kong.

The call for a Commission for Children in Hong Kong was clear, both in the community and in the United Nations. We believe it is the right time to bring this issue forward and to act now with determination. A Children’s Commission may not be the answer to all the problems faced by children but it can be a channel through which the voice of children can be more clearly heard.

We hope the Commission for Children can fulfill the following functions and roles:

1. **Advocate and influence policies** by monitoring the implementation of the UNCRC and the child rights situation in Hong Kong; by reviewing existing policies, ensuring a child impact study is done when policies are changed or new policies introduced and in monitoring the implementation of legislation in practice.

2. **Research and analyze** by developing indicators to measure the improvement of the child rights situation and to conduct research in order to systematically analyze the child rights situation in different aspects.
Let's join hands to make our children grow up in a society that respects their rights!

3. **Coordinate, communicate and cooperate** by liaising with various government bureaux, departments and the private and voluntary sectors on matters affecting children; and by cooperating with local and overseas organizations and professionals to seek better practice and services for children.

4. **Educate and promote children’s rights** by developing guidelines and training materials for the general public and by raising awareness through the media and public campaigns.

5. **Probe** into cases in breach of children’s rights, which have public and policy implications, to suggest necessary changes and to make recommendations for improvement.

6. **Speak for children** by encouraging children to express their views and representing them by putting forward their views and concerns at a higher level to ensure the child’s perspective is being considered; by consulting, communicating and hearing the views directly from children through appropriate channels.

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Against Child Abuse
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Hong Kong College of Paediatricians
Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF
Hong Kong Committee on Children’s Rights
Hong Kong Council of Early Childhood Education and Services
Hong Kong Down Syndrome Association
Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor
Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation
229th Hong Kong Scout Group
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children
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Kids’ Dream
Playright Children’s Play Association
Society for Community Organization
Suen Mei Speech & Hearing Centre
The Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs Association of Hong Kong
The Hong Kong Council of Social Service
The Hong Kong Paediatric Society
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Caritas – Hong Kong
The Boys’ Brigade, Hong Kong
Hong Kong University Students’ Union
The Association of the Advancement of Feminism
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Let’s join hands to make our children grow up in a society that respects their rights!

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