

Hearing of HKSAR's Report under ICESCR in Geneva

A United Nations (UN) Committee of experts will hear China's report under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in Geneva between April 27 to 29 (Wednesday to Friday).

A HKSAR Government team, led by the Acting Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Stephen Fisher and comprising officials from Department of Justice and various policy bureaux will attend the hearing as members of the Chinese delegation (a team from Macau will also attend) and answer questions from the Committee.

The ICESCR is one of the six major human right treaties that apply to Hong Kong and it has done so since 1976.

A government spokesman said the hearing was likely to focus on a list of 28 questions that the Committee put in writing last year and which were answered.

"They concern the implementation of the Covenant in Hong Kong and the progress made since April, 2001, when the committee last examined a report on Hong Kong,"the spokesman said. (The questions and replies are on the Home Affairs Bureau's homepage http://www.hab.gov.hk/en/whats_new/index.htm)

"In 1999, the Central People's Government submitted our initial report under the ICESCR to the UN. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) heard the report in April, 2001," the spokesman said.

On that occasion, the Hong Kong delegation attended the hearing on its own - under the formal leadership of China's Permanent Representative to the UN – as China had only recently ratified the Covenant and its report was not yet due. China's initial report fell due in 2003 and the second report forms part of that report as does Macau's. The report describes developments relevant to ICESCR rights since the 2001 hearing and responds to the concerns and recommendations in the CESCR's concluding observations of May, 2001.

In accordance with its obligations under the Covenant, the Government has undertaken to take steps, to the maximum of its available resources, to achieve progressively the full realisation of the rights recognised in the treaty.

Ends/Monday, April 25, 2005