



President Hu Jintao inspects the People's Liberation Army Garrison in Hong Kong at the naval base on Stonecutters Island in 2007.

Foreign Affairs and National Defence

Foreign affairs and national defence are two key aspects signifying state sovereignty. Hong Kong is a local administrative region of the PRC enjoying a high degree of autonomy. In accordance with the “One Country, Two Systems” principle, the CPG is responsible for foreign affairs relating to Hong Kong, as well as its defence.

Foreign Affairs

Under the Basic Law, the CPG is responsible for the foreign affairs relating to Hong Kong but Hong Kong is authorised to handle external affairs relating to economic, trade, financial and monetary, shipping, communications, tourism, cultural and sports matters on its own, using the name “Hong Kong, China”.

Active Participation in International Organisations

Hong Kong actively participated in many international organisations and conferences before reunification. As provided in the Basic Law, the CPG shall take necessary steps to ensure that Hong Kong continues to retain its status in an appropriate capacity in those international organisations. If China is not a member



of the organisation, the CPG shall also, where necessary, facilitate Hong Kong's continued participation in an appropriate capacity. In addition, representatives of the Hong Kong Government may, as members of PRC delegations, participate in international organisations or conferences in appropriate fields limited to states and affecting Hong Kong, or may attend in another capacity as may be permitted by the CPG and the international organisation or conference concerned. These include the International Telecommunication Union, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the International Labour Organization. Moreover, using the name "Hong Kong, China", it may participate in international organisations and conferences not limited to states to maintain and develop relations with organisations such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, the World Customs Organization and the World Meteorological Organization. Since reunification, Hong Kong has hosted a number of major international events including the Asia Cultural Cooperation Forum in 2003, the ITU Telecom World 2006, the 6th Ministerial Conference of the WTO in 2005, Equestrian Events of the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the 5th East Asian Games in 2009. In addition, non-governmental as well as religious organisations can maintain and develop relations with the relevant international organisations and their counterparts in other countries and regions. These non-governmental organisations may participate in activities under the name of "Hong Kong, China".

The Chief Executive, Mr Donald Tsang, and the US Secretary of State, Mrs Hillary Clinton, exchange views on issues of mutual concern on 25 July 2011.



The continued participation of Hong Kong in international organisations as authorised under the Basic Law has played a vital role in maintaining Hong Kong's position as an international financial, trade, civil aviation and shipping centre.

The Basic Law prescribes continuation of international agreements to which the PRC is not a party but which are implemented in Hong Kong. The Basic Law also provides that the CPG may authorise and assist the Hong Kong Government to negotiate and conclude agreements with other countries and regions on affairs relating to reciprocal judicial assistance, civil aviation, visa abolition, etc. Since reunification, the Hong Kong Government has concluded more than 150 such agreements with foreign countries. In addition, Hong Kong may on its own, using the name “Hong Kong, China”, conclude and implement agreements with foreign states and regions and relevant international organisations in the appropriate fields, including the economic, trade, financial and monetary, shipping, communications, tourism, cultural and sports fields. Since reunification the Hong Kong Government has concluded more than 280 such agreements. The application to Hong Kong of international agreements to which the PRC is or is becoming a party to is decided by the CPG, in accordance with the circumstances and needs of Hong Kong, and after seeking the views of the Hong Kong Government.

These arrangements reflect the “one country” principle under which the CPG is responsible for the foreign affairs relating to Hong Kong on one hand, whilst allowing it to handle external affairs on its own under the authorisation of the Central Authorities on the other.

Missions Established by Other Countries in Hong Kong and by the HKSAR in Other Countries

Under Article 156, Hong Kong may, as necessary, establish official or semi-official economic and trade missions in foreign countries and shall report the establishment of such missions to the CPG. Article 157 provides that the establishment of foreign consular and other official or semi-official missions in Hong Kong shall require the approval of the CPG. There are 120 countries with consular representation in Hong Kong. Many international organisations like the European Union, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Monetary Fund and the Bank for International Settlements have also set up missions in Hong Kong.

Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC in Hong Kong

The Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong was established on 1 July 1997. Under the Basic Law and the principle of “One Country, Two Systems”, the Office handles foreign affairs



The Chief Executive, Mr Donald Tsang, gives the President of Russian federation, Mr Medvedev, an introduction of Government House on 17 April 2011. ©



The Financial Secretary, Mr John C Tsang, receives a certificate of welcome from the Mayor of Los Angeles, Mr Antonio Villaraigosa. ©



On 20 May 2011, the Secretary for Justice, Mr Wong Yan Lung, meets with the French Minister of Justice and Freedom, Mr Michel Mercier, in Paris before leaving for Brussels.



The opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Chengdu (Chengdu ETO) in 2007. Picture shows the Secretary for Constitutional Affairs, Mr Stephen Lam (fifth from right), the Director of Chengdu ETO, Mr Richard Luk (fifth from left), officials of the Central People's Government and provincial/municipal government leaders from Sichuan, Hunan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Shaanxi and Chongqing performing the ribbon-cutting at the new office premises.

relating to Hong Kong that are required to be administered by the CPG. These include Hong Kong's participation in international organisations or conferences that are limited to states, and the negotiation and conclusion of agreements with these organisations and the establishment of foreign consular and official or semi-official missions in Hong Kong.

HKSAR Passport and other Travel Documents

In the context of international relations with states as the subjects, the visa system is the principal system through which a state exercises its sovereignty and decides whether a foreigner's entry should be allowed. On this, the Basic Law authorises the Hong Kong Government to apply its own immigration control in accordance with the applicable immigration legislation and procedures, continue to implement its flexible visa policy, and conclude visa abolition agreements with foreign states and regions. As at 1 January 2012, a total of 144 countries had granted visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to HKSAR passport holders. (Appendix 4: List of Countries/Territories which the HKSAR passport holders have been granted visa-free access or visa-on-arrival to visit)



Vice-Premier Qian Qichen officiated at the inaugural ceremony of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC on 1 July 1997. ©



The Hong Kong-issued passport and the Hong Kong International Airport.

Under Article 154, Hong Kong is authorised to issue HKSAR passports to all Chinese citizens who hold Hong Kong permanent identity cards, and travel documents of the HKSAR to all other persons lawfully residing in Hong Kong. These passports and documents are valid for travel around the world and bear the holders' right to return to Hong Kong.

The Defence of Hong Kong and the Garrison

Under Article 14, the CPG is responsible for the defence of Hong Kong. The People's Liberation Army Hong Kong Garrison (the Garrison) is stationed in Hong Kong to take charge of Hong Kong's defence. The Garrison under the direct leadership of the Central Military Commission is composed of forces from the Army, the Navy and the Air Force of the People's Liberation Army, signifying China's exercise of sovereignty over land, waters and airspace. The Law of the PRC on the Garrisoning of Hong Kong clearly stipulates that the Garrison shall maintain the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the State and be responsible for the defence of Hong Kong, administer military facilities, and handle foreign-related military affairs. The expenditure of the Garrison is borne by the CPG.

The Garrison is an elite unit which strictly abides by both the national and local laws, and does not interfere in Hong Kong affairs. The Hong Kong Government may, when necessary, ask the CPG for assistance from the Garrison in the maintenance of public order and in disaster relief. The Garrison maintains 18 military sites and regularly performs drills and training. Since reunification, the Garrison has also participated in the search and rescue exercises organised by the Civil Aviation Department along with other government departments including the Government Flying Service, the Marine Department, the Police, the Fire Service Department and the Civil Aid Service.

To enable the community to have a more in-depth understanding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army and the Garrison, the Garrison regularly participates in community services such as blood donation and tree planting activities and organises an annual military summer camp and barracks open days. All these events are well received by the public.



Hong Kong Tree Planting Day 2008. ★



The Garrison visits a kindergarten. ★