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**In response to the issues raised about the Unified Screening Mechanism (USM) by Chief Executive CY Leung in the 2016 Policy Address, Piya Muqit, Executive Director of Justice Centre Hong Kong, stated:**

"A comprehensive review of the Unified Screening Mechanism is welcome and it would be crucial to conduct this before any changes to policy or legislation. However, a review without engagement of relevant stakeholders, including civil society, would be anything but 'comprehensive'.

We urgently call on the Hong Kong Government to establish more robust and transparent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the USM. We urge the Hong Kong Government to follow the recommendations recently issued by the UN Committee against Torture on the USM."

**In response to comments made by the Chief Executive about withdrawing from the UN Convention against Torture:**

"Withdrawing from an international human rights treaty would set a disturbing precedent for the future of human rights in Hong Kong. The timing of this comment, so closely after the Committee against Torture's review of Hong Kong in November, sends the wrong message to the international community about Hong Kong being an open society and a global city.

158 countries of 193 UN member states are party to the Convention against Torture. If Hong Kong were to withdraw, it would join the ranks of repressive regimes such as Zimbabwe, Central African Republic and North Korea. Fundamental human rights and freedoms must not be held hostage to politics of the day."

**Ends/**

**Notes to Editors**

To read the UN Committee against Torture's concluding observations, please see: [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1002&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1002&Lang=en)

**Justice Centre Hong Kong** is a non-profit human rights organisation working fearlessly to protect the rights of Hong Kong's most vulnerable forced migrants - refugees, other people seeking protection and survivors of torture, human trafficking and forced labour.