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MEDIA STATEMENT:

Hong Kong Government's inaction on human trafficking sees it join Uzbekistan, Niger and Afghanistan on the Tier 2-Watchlist for the first time ever in 2016 US TIP Report

30 July 2016: After years of inaction the Hong Kong Government has hit a new low, finding the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) placed on the Tier 2-Watchlist on the US State Department's 2016 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, released today.

This puts the Hong Kong territory amongst the world's worst performers on combatting human trafficking, and this downgrade comes after being ranked at Tier 2 for seven consecutive years.

For years, Justice Centre Hong Kong, other civil society organisations and human rights experts at home and abroad have been calling for the Hong Kong Government to adopt comprehensive legislation to prohibit human trafficking in all its forms, including forced labour. The lack of concerted efforts to combat modern slavery has left a stain on what is thought to be a 'World City'.

In reaction to the report, Jade Anderson, Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinator, based at Justice Centre Hong Kong, said:

"Unfortunately, today's announcement – as well as the government's reaction – is not surprising. In its recent report 'Coming Clean' Justice Centre Hong Kong uncovered systemic abuse and exploitation among migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong – that 1 in 6 domestic workers are in forced labour. The government can no longer sweep these problems under the carpet.

This downgrade should offer serious reflection. The other countries in the same category are mostly low-developed countries, whilst Hong Kong is one of the cities with the most millionaires per capita in the world. Clearly, resources are not the cause of inaction, but a lack of political will.

Rather than categorically rejecting the findings and denying any problem, the government should urgently conduct a formal review on the situation of human trafficking and forced labour in the territory, in consultation with civil society."

The TIP Report, released on an annual basis, examines the efforts made by governments around the world to combat human trafficking within their borders through a tier-ranking system of 1, 2, 2-Watch List and 3. Tier 1 is the highest ranking, meaning that states in this

category comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, acknowledge and make proactive efforts to address the problem. States in Tier 3, the worst possible placement, neither fully comply with the minimum standards nor are making significant efforts to do so.

Notes to Editor

A copy of the 2016 US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report can be found here: <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2016/258685.htm>

The Hong Kong Government's press release in response to TIP report can be found here: <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201606/30/P201606301004.htm>

Justice Centre Hong Kong's report "Coming Clean" can be found here: <http://www.justicecentre.org.hk/comingclean>

Justice Centre Hong Kong is a human rights organisation that works fearlessly to protect the rights of Hong Kong's most vulnerable forced migrants: refugees, other people seeking protection and survivors of human trafficking and forced labour. Launched in March 2014, Justice Centre Hong Kong was formerly Hong Kong Refugee Advice Centre which, over a period of seven years, helped more than 2,000 refugee men, women and children on the road to a new life. www.justicecentre.org.hk.