Foreign Secretary David Cameron said:

The Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong confirmed that for 50 years, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) would maintain a high degree of autonomy and that the rights and freedoms, as provided for by the laws previously in force in Hong Kong, would continue. Hong Kong’s Basic Law sets out those rights and freedoms.

As a co-signatory to the Joint Declaration, the UK has a responsibility to ensure that those rights and freedoms are maintained.

The UK government recognises the right of all jurisdictions to implement legislation to address national security concerns.  We also acknowledge that Hong Kong has a constitutional obligation to introduce such legislation under Article 23 of the Basic Law.

Hong Kong is also required to ensure that national security legislation aligns with international standards and upholds rights and freedoms, as set out in the Joint Declaration, the Basic Law, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Legislative proposals announced on 30 January by the Hong Kong government do not uphold these obligations. They will have a negative impact on the people of Hong Kong in the exercise of their rights and freedoms.

My officials have raised our concerns privately with the Hong Kong authorities and through the public consultation process. Those concerns include, but are not limited to:

* the toughening of penalties for speech crimes and the use of the broadly defined term ‘state secrets’ will inhibit freedom of speech, of expression and of the press
* the risk that the work of international organisations in Hong Kong could be labelled as ‘foreign interference’
* vague references to ‘external forces’ and the new offence of ‘external interference’ threaten the legitimate and lawful diplomatic and consular activity as protected in the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations
* the absence of any reference to independent oversight, or the mechanisms that would support it
* lack of clarity on the procedures that will govern detention without charge, and the absence of a judicial oversight mechanism
* the absence of any provision for independent and robust mechanisms to safeguard against arbitrary action by the executive on national security grounds

The UK has noted the references to UK national security legislation throughout the consultation document. UK national security legislation is informed by public consultation and was subject to full scrutiny by both Houses of Parliament, including the democratically elected House of Commons. This ensures that our national security legislation is fully representative of the views of the UK public and has democratic legitimacy.

I strongly urge the Hong Kong SAR government to re-consider their proposals and engage in genuine and meaningful consultation with the people of Hong Kong.

We will monitor development of this legislation closely.