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Argue for better future – Patten

Governor Chris Patten yesterday urged Hong Kong people to stand up and argue for a better future rather than just counting the days until the transfer of sovereignty.

"You see, counting is in a way a cop-out. Hong Kong, I repeat, was promised that things wouldn't change," Mr Patten told RTHK's *Letter to Hong Kong*.

He said it would be more sensible "to have the self-confidence to make sure it is unnecessary".

"We can't count our way to a better future. We have to work for that. Argue for that. Stand up for that. I don't believe that people have been ticking off the years and months and days since the Joint Declaration was first signed.

"That hasn't been the basis for Hong Kong's development. People have got on with their lives, made the most of things, the best of things, and the best has happened."

He said Britain and China had pledged Hong Kong would not change with the flag.

"Hong Kong will carry on just as it is today. Now there are going to be some people at this point saying, 'Come off it. Why doesn't the Governor get real? Of course, things will change'.

"Well yes. Some things are bound to change. But the fundamentals are supposed to stay the same. And the best way of ensuring that they do . . . is to act confidently on that assumption and to stand up for it if that should prove necessary."