

**Presentation by Secretary for Constitutional Affairs
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on Tuesday, 20 March 2001**

Mr Chairman,

Good morning, Honourable Members. I am pleased to have the opportunity to brief you on the main areas of work undertaken by the Constitutional Affairs Bureau and talk about our estimates of expenditure in 2001-02. Our workload remains heavy in the coming financial year but our estimated provision of \$37.1 million is the smallest among all policy bureaux.

Implementation of the Basic Law

2. The Constitutional Affairs Bureau (CAB) is responsible for providing advice to other bureaux and departments of the HKSARG, to ensure that the formulation and implementation of policies comply with the relevant provisions of the Basic Law.

Maintaining Cordial Working Relationship with the CPG, other Mainland Authorities and Macao Special Administrative Region Government (MSARG)

3. CAB works closely with the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (HKMAO) of the State Council to cultivate and maintain cordial and constructive working relationship between the HKSARG and the Central People's Government (CPG) and other Mainland authorities. We also assist bureaux and departments of the HKSARG in establishing direct channels of contact with their Mainland counterparts.

4. Since Macao's reunification in December 1999, CAB has been coordinating the exchanges between the HKSARG and the MSARG.

External Affairs and Working Relationship with the MFA Office

5. CAB keeps an overview of the conduct of the HKSAR's external affairs and acts as the focal point of contact between the HKSARG and the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC in the HKSAR (MFA Office). We will continue to maintain close liaison with the MFA Office and manage HKSAR's external affairs in accordance with the Basic Law.

Accountability of Principal Officials

6. In his last Policy Address, the Chief Executive pointed to the need to examine how the accountability of principal officials for their respective policy

portfolios can be enhanced. The review is now under way. CAB will take part in the study with a view to working out an integrated and effective system.

Electoral Issues

7. On the electoral front, we propose to provide the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) with a provision of about \$79.2 million in the 2001-02 financial year.

8. The provision required by REO in 2001-02 is \$207.7 million less than the revised estimate for 2000-01. This is mainly because the provision set aside for election expenses has been significantly reduced in size after the completion of the Legislative Council Election in 2000.

9. We have introduced the Chief Executive Election Bill to the Legislative Council last Wednesday. The Bill proposes that the Electoral Affairs Commission will be responsible for conducting and supervising electoral process. As in the past, the REO will provide the EAC with the necessary administrative and logistical support.