

Panel on Constitutional Affairs
System of accountability for principal officials

Issues for public consultation

In his Policy Address delivered in October 2000, the Chief Executive (CE) has announced that the Government would study how the accountability of principal officials at Secretaries and Directors of Bureaux rank for their respective policy portfolios can be enhanced. The Government would consider devising a compatible system of appointment for these principal officials, setting out their powers and responsibilities and at the same time defining clearly their role in formulating and implementing government policies under the new system.

The Panel on Constitutional Affairs of the Legislative Council invites written views from the public on the "System of accountability for principal officials". The issues to be covered include -

- (1) a proposed system under which the accountability of principal officials/ministers can be enhanced;
- (2) the system of appointment and removal of principal officials/ministers under the proposed system, e.g. authority of appointment and removal, conditions and term of office; the role of LegCo in the process of appointment and removal; under what circumstances should a principal official/minister be penalized or dismissed;
- (3) the powers and responsibilities of principal officials/ministers; their role in formulating and implementing government policies;
- (4) the administrative and financial arrangements for terminating the service of existing civil servants and re-appointing them as principal officials/ministers under the proposed system;
- (5) pros and cons of appointing principal officials/ministers from within or outside the civil service;
- (6) the relationship of principal officials/ministers with the Executive Council and the civil service;
- (7) should consideration be given to electing CE by universal suffrage before implementing the proposed system; whether the proposed system will be different if CE is returned by universal suffrage, and if so, in what ways;
- (8) how can the independence of regulatory bodies such as Securities and Futures Commission and Hong Kong Monetary Authority and the editorial autonomy of Radio Television Hong Kong be guaranteed so that they are free from political intervention under the proposed system; and
- (9) any other related issues