

LegCo Panel on Home Affairs Special Meeting (9 July 2002) Follow-up Discussion on the Sports Policy Review

The Hon Ip Kwok-him, JP, Chairman and Members of the Panel,

Sports Policy Review

1. Further to our presentation on the captioned subject at the last meeting dated 22.6.02, I wish to elaborate on the following views of SF&OC.

2. We want to, firstly, reiterate that we stand by the Government on this exercise as we see that constructive steps are being taken in the right direction. Although the Paper from HAB has not provided too much detail as to how things would proceed, some key concerns and problematic issues have been quite succinctly underscored as fundamental to achieving a brighter sports future for the SAR. The Government appears to be very much aware that:

- a) it is vital to have closer collaboration between the Government and the sports sector in this renewal process and that the knowledge, expertise and active involvement of the sports people is indispensable in helping to shape the sports future of SAR;
- b) there is a need to further foster mutual trust and effective communication between Government and the sports sector; and that the presence of an “agent” may only serve to create hurdles for this purpose;
- c) the shortage of venue and facilities will need to be work on with top priority;
- d) resources are limited and that other sources of sports funding will need to be explored;
- e) the funding system needed to be streamlined and reviewed according to a broader development scheme agreeable to all stakeholders concerned;
- f) there is much benefit to sports development by reducing cost, improving communication and efficiency in the administration machinery;
- g) there is a relative lack of efforts and policies directed towards promoting an active sports culture for all and towards facilitating wider participation of sports in schools all the way through to universities and in the continuation of development of athletes;
- h) the SAR needs a comprehensive sports policy which aims more at the longer term benefits and with goals and strategic action plans set out for a long term plan.

3. We see that most of the suggestions for change made in the Consultation Paper are borne out of the above thinking. While actions in more concrete terms still need to be worked out, we see that things have been put in the right perspectives. We are therefore supportive to most of the proposed moves made in the Paper, which were highlighted in para. 2 in our earlier submission (Appendix 1). We want to further comment on these points as follows:

- a) Strengthening the ties between HKSI and NSAs under the Federation’s leadership

Improving the communication and coordination between HKSI and NSAs as regards training programmes and deployment of coaches will undoubtedly be of greater benefit to our national athletes. The current state of matter is not entirely satisfactory

as some NSAs feel that their autonomy and expertise are being played down in these areas. At present the national coaches are only accountable to the HKSI under SDB. The Government's proposal of following the practice of the Australian Institute of Sports by arranging the agreements to be signed between the national coaches and the NSAs and to spell out responsibilities for development programmes at the outset for the sports concerned is well worth considering. The HKSI is the home base for training our national athletes. Being in such a key role, its policies and management practices all have important consequences on our sports development at the elite level. We feel therefore that there should be greater participation and input from the SF&OC and NSAs in its policy and management decisions.

b) Review of funding policies and streamline the process under one centralized body

At present, NSAs apply their funding from 2 main sources, the SDB and LCSD. The applications are separately vetted depending on the nature of the programme proposed. This practice not only creates extra administrative work for both NSAs and the vetting bodies, but also makes longer-term planning difficult for the NSAs. Vetting of applications by one centralized body will help cut down on administrative work. By coordinating their activities under one single plan, NSAs can become more goal-focus. The vetting body can have a more comprehensive understanding of the plans of the NSAs and make appropriate decision as to how they can help NSAs make progress in a more strategic manner.

c) Strategically plan and build more venues

We recognize Government's recent efforts in this area and the intention of preparing the SAR to host major games event in the next decade. The shortage of venue is a very chronic problem, the proposals to build 2 major stadia of world class standard in S.E. Kowloon and in West Kowloon as well as revamping some older venues certainly breathes new hopes into SAR's sports development.

d) Review of policies on use of venues and designated venues for sports

This is a related issue borne out of venue shortage. Before more venues can be made available, it is absolutely essential that there is a good policy that balances sports development needs and public usage on the current limited venue resources. Possibilities of deployment of available resources for different use, designating some venues for strategic development for certain sports, simplifying booking arrangements, waiving of charges, upgrading venue support services, outsourcing some venues to achieving better efficiency are some of the immediate remedies to the current situation. Input from NSAs as end users is important in exploring these options.

- e) Encouraging more sports participation by students creating a “through train” system from grassroots to the elite level

The Government is taking a bold step forward in this respect. The proposals to intensify the sports curriculum in schools, to make sports facilities in schools and public venues more accessible to students, developing junior sports clubs outside schools, to give due recognition to students’ sports achievement in university entry policy, to develop better career opportunities for coaches and athletes and the idea of drawing up “Athletes’ Plans” as a more focused approach to develop our athletes, etc. are foreseeably a humongous task even to contemplate. The benefits are huge as everybody can envisage. Such a major task could only be worked out with collaborative efforts and consensus reached among all stakeholders. We see that the new Sports Commission is a center place to pull efforts and resources from all concerned especially government departments, the sports, education and business communities together;

- f) Encouraging local level development through expansion of community sports club system under the NSAs’ control

We appreciate that this might well be an effective way of widening sports participation. We want to caution however that it is important to have coordinated efforts for all parties concerned for it might well result in unnecessary fights for limited venue and other resources without helping to make progress in terms raising sports standards and providing a nurturing ground for the young athletes. A system will need to be developed so as to facilitate this coordination between NSAs and the community sports clubs and to ensure the delivery of high quality and standards of practice in club level activities and training.

- g) Establish a Sports Commission to replace SDB

We see that the Sports Commission can take on the task of working out a comprehensive sports policy such as the ones mentioned above. The Commission is likely to be in a better position to coordinate government departments and various stakeholders in the education, business, environmental and many other sectors. With participation in the right balanced proportion of the SF&OC and its delegates, who regularly maintain contacts with NSAs, there is assurance that views of sports community can be truly reflected in future policies. We also believe that by this more direct approach of the Government, the Commission, when served by dedicated members in the sports community who had demonstrated their passion integrity and commitment to developing sports in the SAR, and operating under a spirit of true partnership for all parties concerned, can be more effective than the present system and will be better able to take our sports standards to newer heights

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