

**Speaking Note for
Mr Ambrose LEE, Secretary for Security
at the Public Hearing of the Legislative Council Public Accounts Committee
held on 10 March 2009**

(A) Focus of the Audit's Report

- At the public hearings conducted on 6 and 8 January, Members discussed the Director of Audit's Report No. 51 in detail.
- The focus of the report is on whether the Fire Services Department (FSD) has effectively deployed existing resources to meet the demand of those in genuine need of emergency ambulance service (EAS), and whether it has kept and made good use of information to improve the effectiveness of the EAS. The Security Bureau (SB) and the FSD welcome the recommendations made in the report. The FSD, in collaboration with the relevant departments, will follow-up on the recommendations, and the SB will also closely monitor the progress.

(B) General Principles governing the Resource Allocation Exercise

- The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury has earlier given a detailed account on the general issues of the Resource Allocation Exercise (RAE). The Administration has also provided much information on the RAEs conducted in the past few years and explained the process for allocating resources to FSD's EAS.
- As Members would be aware, departments would apply for the resources that they would like to be given on the basis of their operational requirements in the annual RAEs. However, as the amount of available resources is finite, bureaux have to prioritise the bids from departments and make recommendations to the Centre on the proposed allocations based on the justifications provided by the departments, the actual situation, and the resources available for re-deployment.
- There are eight disciplinary departments under SB's purview, overseeing various areas of work, including the maintenance of law and order, immigration and customs control, fire fighting and ambulance services, all of which are of great importance to social stability and public safety.

- In the annual RAEs, the departments under the SB's purview would propose the creation of thousands of new posts according to the established mechanism. We could not possibly support each bid to the full, but we would ensure that with our recommendations, the resources eventually allocated to the disciplinary departments would enable their heads to carry out their duties effectively and achieve the departments' performance pledges to the community.
- Therefore, as a Bureau Secretary, I would carefully consider the bids from each department and would deploy resources as appropriate.
- It is true that we did not, and in fact could not fully meet the requests made by the heads of each of the disciplinary departments. Neither would we recommend priority to every bid without taking an overview of all the bids from departments. This would not help the Centre in allocating limited resources to the most important or urgent services at the time.
- As a Bureau Secretary, I must manage the major resources and manpower demands from all departments under my purview, and at the same time responding to the special needs and concerns of the Centre in a responsible manner. Take the FSD as an example, the decisions we made on resource allocation in the past few years have generally enabled the department to achieve its performance pledge on the provision of ambulance service. For instance, the response time was 92.7% in 2006, 92.8% in 2007, 92.2% in 2008 and 92.8% in the first two months of 2009.
- In fact, we have all along been adopting a multi-pronged approach in meeting the response time performance pledge. We will seek provision of additional manpower as needed, and step up public education to minimise the misuse of ambulance service. Last but not least, we will continue to explore management measures such as introducing a medical priority despatch system, to give priority to people in urgent need of ambulance service.
- On the way forward, the SB and the FSD will continue to enhance communication on policy considerations and ways to effectively deploy existing resources, with the aim to ensure that our EAS can achieve the performance pledge.

(C) **Follow-up actions**

- In closing, I would like to assure Members that the bureaux and departments in attendance today will follow up on the recommendations set out in the Audit's report seriously and proactively. These recommendations include a review of the response time performance, to ascertain the reasons for failing to achieve the targets in certain districts and take appropriate remedial actions, and a review on the existing mechanism for the replacement of ambulances.
- As a matter of fact, we have numerous discussions at the meetings of the Panel on Security in the past on how to cope with the demand for ambulance service, the establishment in the ambulance stream and the future development of ambulance service. We believe that such issues will continue to be discussed and followed-up by the Panel on Security.
- We will continue to, as we have done before, ensure that the FSD will achieve its performance pledge on the provision of ambulance service to the public.