

LegCo Public Accounts Committee (5 May 2009)

**Report No. 52 of the Director of Audit
Chapter 3: Equal Opportunities Commission**

Speech of the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

Chairman,

We welcome the Director of Audit's Report on the Equal Opportunities Commission.

We respect the autonomy of the Commission, as an independent statutory body, in its internal management and operations. As the Government provides subvention to the Commission for its operation, we attach great importance to the observations and recommendations in the Report of the Director of Audit regarding the governance and administration of the Commission.

We have written to the Chairperson of the Commission to underline the importance for the Commission to carefully consider the observations and recommendations in the Report, and take appropriate follow up actions, including reviewing the internal guidelines, procedures and control mechanisms, with a view to ensuring good governance and efficient and economical use of resources.

We also accept the four recommendations in the report for the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau. We will take appropriate follow-up actions to implement the recommendations. First, in relation to the recommendation to expedite action to take forward the matter in relation to a proposal to change the post of the Chairperson to a non-executive one, and reinstate the post of Chief Executive Officer, and bring it to a satisfactory conclusion, we are taking follow-up actions. We note that some Members of the Legislative Council expressed strong reservations about the proposal in 2006. We will consult the Constitutional Affairs Panel of the Legislative Council later, and listen to further views expressed by Legislative Council Members regarding the proposal, in order to further deal with the matter.

Secondly, the Report recommended that, when considering the reappointment of EOC members, their attendance rate at Board meetings should be considered. We have recently completed the appointment of the new Board of the Commission. We have fully considered various factors, including the attendance rates of incumbent members, members' abilities, expertise, experience, and commitment to public service, in order to appoint the most suitable persons to be members of the Commission. We will continue to take into account these factors in the appointment of suitable persons in future.

Thirdly, regarding the Memorandum of Administrative Arrangements (MAA) between the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau and the Commission, we have initiated the discussion with the Commission on the amendments to the MAA last year. We have now reached the final stage of discussions, and the updated draft has been sent to the Commission. We understand that the Commission will finalise the MAA with us as soon as practicable. In future, we will take timely action to update the MAA with the Commission, to reflect changing developments and circumstances.

Fourthly, regarding the performance indicators of the EOC, we are working with the EOC to develop additional indicators, to be reflected in the Controlling Officers' Report next year.

I would like to reiterate that the Government attaches great importance to the Director of Audit's Report. We will maintain close liaison with the Commission to ensure the implementation of the recommendations in the report by the Commission. The Government will render full cooperation with the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council and respond to the Committee's request for information, in order to facilitate the Committee's work.

Thank you, Chairman.