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8 July 2013

Clerk to Panel on Public Service  
Legislative Council  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central  
Hong Kong  
(Attn: Ms Shirley Chan)

Dear Ms Chan,

**Hong Kong Blind Union's submission  
on employment of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service**

Thank you for your letter of 19 June 2013, referring to us a submission dated 17 June 2013 from the Hong Kong Blind Union ("the Union) concerning the employment of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service. Our response to the issues raised in the submission is set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

The Government, being an Equal Opportunities Employer, is committed to eliminating disabilities and other forms of discrimination in employment. Appointments to the Civil Service are based on the principle of open and fair competition. All candidates in an open recruitment exercise are assessed on the basis of their character, ability and performance having regard to the stipulated entry requirements set according to the job requirements of the civil service grades concerned. In line with this principle, our policy and related facilitating measures on the employment of persons with disabilities seek to enable candidates with

disabilities, irrespective of the types of disability, to compete with able-bodied candidates on equal footing, thereby allowing them to have equal access to job opportunities in the Government.

We welcome persons with disabilities to apply for government jobs and have put in place suitable facilitating measures with a view to enabling candidates with disabilities who meet the basic entry requirements to compete with able-bodied candidates on equal footing. The policy and related facilitating measures are applicable to candidates with disabilities, including those with visual impairment.

Under the existing guidelines, at the initial stage of a recruitment exercise, candidates with disabilities who meet the basic entry requirements for a post will not be subject to shortlisting criteria, if any. Once candidates with disabilities meet the basic entry requirements, they will be automatically invited to attend selection interview/test.

Where a candidate who has indicated that he/she has a disability is invited to a test/interview, the recruiting bureau/department (B/D) is required to proactively ascertain from the candidate any assistance or accommodation needed so as to facilitate him/her in attending the test/interview. The test/interview process would also suitably be adjusted to cater for his/her special needs. For example, for candidates with visual impairment, the recruiting B/D may provide them with braille examination paper, enlarged question paper, braille or personal computer with special software, or extend the examination time having regard to the degree of the candidates' disability and complexity of the paper.

After the test/selection interview, if a candidate with disability is found suitable by the recruitment board to carry out the duties of certain posts in a specific rank in the Civil Service, he/she may be recommended for appointment even though he/she may not be able, due to his/her disability, to perform the full range of duties of every post in the concerned rank. In addition, an appropriate degree of preference may be given to candidates with disabilities found suitable for appointment by placing them ahead of able-bodied candidates whose suitability for appointment is considered comparable to the former.

As an essential part of the policy to integrate persons with disabilities in the workplace, we provide on-the-job assistance and reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities working in the Government so as to facilitate them in performing their duties, e.g. modifications of work areas and facilities, appropriate adjustments to job

design and work schedules, provision of necessary equipments, etc. A central fund has been set up to finance purchase of technical aids, such as computers with braille displays, telephone amplifiers, scanners and magnifying devices, for officers with disabilities to facilitate their performance of duties.

While there is no mandatory requirement for applicants for government jobs and serving officers to declare their disabilities, we compile statistics on the employment of persons with disabilities in the Civil Service as at 31 March each year<sup>1</sup> on the basis of information available to the management of B/Ds (e.g. through applicants' requests for special arrangement for selection interview/test, and serving officers' applications for central fund to purchase technical aids). For reference, we set out at **Annex A** the number of new recruits who declared their disabilities, including those with visual impairment, in the Civil Service in the past ten years. As shown in the figures at **Annex A**, since the lifting of the open recruitment freeze, the number of new recruits with visual impairment, alongside with other new recruits with disabilities, has been increasing steadily. In addition, we provide at **Annex B** the number of persons with disabilities, including those with visual impairment, serving in and leaving the Civil Service in the past ten years. It is noted that with natural wastage, coupled with the impact of the recruitment freeze, there had been a decrease in the number of people with disabilities in the Civil Service. But the number, including that of persons with visual impairment, has been increasing steadily in recent few years.

We hope the above would facilitate the Panel and the Union in understanding the employment situation of persons with disabilities, including those with visual impairment, in the Civil Service. The Government would continue its efforts in implementing the policy and related facilitating measures on employment of persons with disabilities with a view to facilitating those who are interested in joining the Civil Service, including people with visual impairment, in applying for government jobs.

Yours sincerely,



(Miss Natalie Li)  
for Secretary for the Civil Service

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics as at 31 March 2013 will be available in the third quarter of 2013.

**Number of new recruits with disabilities  
including those with visual impairment in the Civil Service  
in the past ten years**

Year	Number of new recruits who declared that they were visually impaired <sup>Note 1</sup>	Number of new recruits who declared their disabilities <sup>Note 1</sup>	Total number of new recruits
2002-03 <sup>Note 2</sup>	0	2	1 917
2003-04 <sup>Note 2</sup>	0	0	173
2004-05 <sup>Note 2</sup>	1	1	558
2005-06 <sup>Note 2</sup>	0	0	1 404
2006-07 <sup>Note 2</sup>	0	3	2 780
2007-08	0	13	4 202
2008-09	7	28	6 112
2009-10	7	41	6 027
2010-11	8	40	5 465
2011-12	12	50	7 877

Note 1 New recruits with colour blindness or defective colour perception are not included in the statistics.

Note 2 There was significant drop in the recruitment figures due to the implementation of enhanced efficiency drives in the period, particularly the six years of open recruitment freeze which ended in March 2007 (namely from 1999-00 to 2006-07, save for 2001-02 and 2002-03 when exceptional approval was given for a limited number of grades to conduct open recruitment to meet special operational needs).

**Number of persons with disabilities  
including those with visual impairment serving in and  
leaving the Civil Service in the past ten years**

Year	Number of persons with visual impairment serving in the Civil Service <sup>Note 1</sup>	Number of persons with disabilities serving in the Civil Service <sup>Note 1</sup>	Total Strength in the Civil Service	Number of persons with visual impairment leaving the Civil Service <sup>Note 3</sup>
2002-03 <sup>Note 2</sup>	594	3 398	169 100	35
2003-04 <sup>Note 2</sup>	565	3 319	163 039	33
2004-05 <sup>Note 2</sup>	542	3 241	157 300	25
2005-06 <sup>Note 2</sup>	523	3 256	155 019	12
2006-07 <sup>Note 2</sup>	509	3 263	153 805	18
2007-08	497	3 225	153 477	20
2008-09	484	3 238	155 128	28
2009-10	465	3 316	156 573	31
2010-11	456	3 317	156 886	23
2011-12	462	3 391	159 195	24

Note 1 Persons with colour blindness or defective colour perception are not included in the statistics.

Note 2 There was significant drop in the recruitment figures due to the implementation of enhanced efficiency drives in the period, particularly the six years of open recruitment freeze which ended in March 2007 (namely from 1999-00 to 2006-07, save for 2001-02 and 2002-03 when exceptional approval was given for a limited number of grades to conduct open recruitment to meet special operational needs).

Note 3 Reasons for leaving the Civil Service include retirement, resignation, death, etc.