

Motion on
“Reforming the accountability system for principal officials”
Legislative Council Meeting of 23 June 2021

Progress Report

Purpose

The motion on “Reforming the accountability system for principal officials” moved by the Hon Starry LEE was passed at the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) meeting of 23 June 2021. The full text of the motion passed is at [Annex](#). This paper reports on the progress of the subject.

Political Appointment System

2. The Political Appointment System is an integral part of the governing structure of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“HKSAR”) Government. In 2002, the HKSAR Government introduced the first batch of politically appointed Secretaries of Department and Directors of Bureau to create a political tier at the top echelon of the Government. In 2008, the Political Appointment System was further developed leading to the creation of two additional tiers of political appointment positions, namely Deputy Directors of Bureau and Political Assistants, thus forming the current three-tier Political Appointment System.

3. Under the current Political Appointment System, politically appointed officials and the civil service have been working closely together to make the HKSAR Government more comprehensive in policy making, swift and effective in responding to public aspirations, and more responsive to public sentiment and the development needs of the community. In accordance with the spirit and division of labour under the Political Appointment System, politically appointed officials must keep their fingers on the pulse of society, and by way of two-way communication, to gauge public sentiment and views, to understand the needs of the community and consider formulating relevant policies, so as to foster public understanding and support of government policies. The role of

civil servants is to assist politically appointed officials in policy formulation and implementation. The “Code for Officials under the Political Appointment System”¹ has clearly specified the working relationship between politically appointed officials and civil servants, as well as their respective responsibilities.

4. As the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs pointed out at the LegCo meeting, all politically appointed officials share a common vision of supporting the Chief Executive’s (“CE”) lawful administration and striving for the well-being of our country, our city and our people. In fact, policy bureaux and departments will align and provide support to each other in policy formulation and implementation, and act in the overall interest of the Hong Kong community, the long-term development of the city as well as the welfare of Hong Kong.

Improving the Electoral System and Enhancing the Effectiveness of Governance

5. We fully appreciate the expectations of the public and LegCo members on the governance of the HKSAR Government. The enactment of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“the Hong Kong National Security Law”) on 30 June 2020 has been effective in stopping violence and curbing disorder, and in restoring social stability; whereas the passage of the Improving Electoral System (Consolidated Amendments) Bill 2021 on 27 May 2021 would further ensure the full implementation of the principle of “patriots administering Hong Kong”. These two key measures are of paramount importance to safeguard the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong.

6. The HKSAR Government will make its best endeavor to ensure the next three very important elections are conducted openly, fairly and honestly in a clean and orderly manner. The Election Committee Subsectors Ordinary Elections (ECSSOEs) will be the first election among the three elections. It is also the first election after the electoral system of the HKSAR is improved and hence bears great significance. In relation

¹ For the text of the “Code for Officials under the Political Appointment System”, please visit the website of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau: https://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/PAO_Code_1.7.2012.pdf.

to the preparatory work, the nomination period of the ECSSOEs have been completed smoothly from 6 to 12 August. During the period, returning officers received 40 nomination forms from designated bodies nominating 231 persons; and 1,016 nomination forms for elected seats. The Candidate Eligibility Review Committee (CERC) is making its best efforts to determine whether the persons being nominated meet the relevant statutory requirements including whether they uphold the Basic Law and bear allegiance to the HKSAR. The CERC will need to announce the determination of valid nomination no later than 26 August. The ECSSOEs will be held on 19 September, and the elected candidates together with the ex-officio members and nominated members will form the new term of Election Committee.

7. Under the improved electoral system, the Election Committee is vested with two new important functions. Apart from nominating and electing the CE, it will also be responsible for electing 40 members of the LegCo and nominating all candidates in the LegCo election. Not only would it expand the representativeness of LegCo, maintain the principle of balanced participation, and ensure that the interests and aspirations of different sectors are taken into account in the LegCo, it could also integrate the interests of various sectors, groups and districts with the overall interest of Hong Kong society. The future LegCo will have a stronger foundation to prioritise the overall interests of Hong Kong. The interaction between the executive authorities and the legislature can be more constructive and rational, thereby steadfastly fulfilling and discharging the constitutional duty of the legislature as enshrined in the Basic Law. The HKSAR Government can also communicate and cooperate with LegCo members more effectively to safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, as well as to formulate policies that are more in line with public aspirations and enhance the efficacy of governance, thereby improving people's livelihood and economic prosperity.

Capitalising on the National 14th Five-Year Plan to Promote Development of Hong Kong

8. Following the passage of the Hong Kong National Security Law and the orderly implementation of the work of improving the electoral system, we believe that the new political landscape will facilitate smooth

implementation of government policies and be conducive to social stability. Under the leadership of the CE and the concerted efforts of principal officials and patriotic administrators of Hong Kong, the HKSAR Government will strive for good governance and work with all sectors of the community to focus on economic development and improving people's livelihood.

9. The National 14th Five-Year Plan establishes a clear positioning for Hong Kong's future development. The HKSAR Government will fully leverage on its advantages under "one country, two systems" and proactively become a "participant" in domestic circulation and a "facilitator" in international circulation, make good use of the development opportunities arising from the National 14th Five-Year Plan, as well as through the Greater Bay Area development as the best entry point to focus on the business opportunities in the Mainland market, proactively participate in fostering regional co-operation and better integrate into the overall development of our country, with a view to meeting the country's needs and at the same time creating new impetus for economic and social development of Hong Kong.

10. The HKSAR Government has also been closely monitoring the development of the epidemic and adjust preventive and anti-epidemic work effectively in a timely manner. The CE announced in early August that there was a need for Hong Kong to build up double protective barriers against the epidemic by strengthening measures on preventing importation of cases and enhancing vaccination rate as soon as possible. Different measures have also been introduced actively to facilitate the public to receive vaccination so as to establish an anti-epidemic barrier in the community expeditiously.

11. Moreover, during the Tokyo Olympic Games, the HKSAR Government secured the broadcasting rights such that all members of the public could share the Olympics atmosphere and cheer for Hong Kong athletes. Like all members of the public in Hong Kong, the CE and her political team are very excited by the historic achievements of the Hong Kong team in the Olympic Games and are proud of our athletes. In this connection, the CE announced on 10 August 2021 a number of new supportive measures to further promote sports development in Hong Kong.

12. We understand that there are many demands and suggestions from different sectors of the community on the Government's governance and policy areas. The CE is conducting some 30 consultation sessions for the 2021 Policy Address. Areas to be covered include people's livelihood and welfare, finance, commerce and trade, aviation, legal services, innovation and technology, education and labour, health technology, land and housing, medical and health services, sports, arts and culture, and sustainable development, etc. The CE will also meet with LegCo members, representatives of different sectors and members of the public to listen to their views and suggestions, and map out the future of Hong Kong.

Concluding Remarks

13. The HKSAR Government will continue to keep an open mind and humbly listen to LegCo members and all walks of life, while actively respond to their views and suggestions. The Government will also further enhance the Political Appointment System as and when necessary for enhancement of our administrative efficiency and governance so as to better serve the public. We believe that the sixth-term HKSAR Government will definitely consider in detail the opinions expressed by members in this motion debate.

**Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
August 2021**

Legislative Council meeting on 23 June 2021

**The Hon Starry LEE's motion on
"Reforming the accountability system for principal officials"**

Wording of the Motion

That the Government introduced the accountability system for principal officials in 2002 with the aims to select talents in governance from various sectors of the community, enhance the accountability of principal officials for their respective policy portfolios, better coordinate the formulation of policies and enhance the efficiency of policy implementation, enhance cooperation between the Executive and the Legislature, and better respond to the needs of the community; however, after being implemented for over 18 years, the accountability system for principal officials has failed to fully achieve the above objectives; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to, having regard to the latest development, effect positive change in reviewing the accountability system for principal officials to enhance the governance level, thereby resolving the deep-rooted conflicts in the community and better promoting Hong Kong's development.