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## LC Paper No. CB(2)1057/06-07(01) REGISTRATION AND ELECTORAL OFFICE

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7 February 2007

Clerk to Legislative Council Panel on  
Constitutional Affairs  
(Attn: Mrs Percy Ma)  
Legislative Council  
Legislative Council Building  
8 Jackson Road  
Hong Kong

Dear Mrs Ma,

### **Practical Arrangements for the Election of the Third Term Chief Executive**

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs held on 23 January 2007, the Hon LEE Wing Tat asked for additional information on the action taken by the Registration and Electoral Office (“REO”) in securing a suitable venue for use as the polling and counting station for the Chief Executive (“CE”) Election. This letter serves to provide the necessary information.

#### **Size and booking period required of the polling and counting station**

2. When identifying a suitable venue, the REO is mindful of the need for the area to be large enough to accommodate a polling station which comprises a sufficient number of issuing desks and voting compartments, and a counting station which comprises a counting zone, resting and seating areas for the Election Committee (“EC”) members, candidate(s) and agents, a working area for the media, and a seating area for members of the public who wish to observe the counting of votes. The venue also needs to have sufficient space to

accommodate an on-site central command centre, and offices for relevant government departments.

3. In addition, when looking for a suitable venue, the REO will also need to ensure that the venue is available not only on the polling day, but also a few days before and after the polling day. In other words, the booking will need to last for six to seven days<sup>1</sup>. We need to take over the venue two to three days before the polling day for all the necessary setting-up, testing and preparatory work. We also need the venue for two days after the polling day to ensure that the same place can still be used in case of any slight postponement or adjournment of polling and / or counting or in case the fourth or further rounds of polling are required in a contested election.

### **Efforts to identify a suitable venue in the HKCEC**

4. With the above in mind, the REO started in early July 2005 (ie shortly after the completion of the 2005 CE election) to explore with a number of venue managements, including the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (“HKCEC”), Asia World Expo, Hongkong International Trade and Exhibition Centre, and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the availability of suitable venues for setting up a counting station for the EC subsector elections in December 2006, as well as a polling and counting station for the CE Election to be held in March 2007. The exercise to identify suitable venues for both occasions was conducted in parallel.

5. It turned out that, for the EC subsector elections, a suitable venue was available in HKCEC and was booked from 6 to 12 December 2006 (seven days inclusive) to serve as the central counting station.

6. As regards the CE Election, we wrote to HKCEC in July 2005 to seek a suitable venue in HKCEC for a period of 6 to 7 days surrounding 25 March 2007, and were advised that venues at HKCEC were not available during the period. During the period from July 2005 to February 2006, continuous liaison effort was made by the REO with the management of HKCEC on the possibility of identifying a suitable venue during the intended booking period for conducting the CE Election. In parallel, REO contacted other venue managements, such as AsiaWorld-Expo, to reserve suitable venue. In January

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<sup>1</sup> The requirement for the booking to last for six to seven days is not unique to the polling and counting station of the CE election, but is also applicable to, say, the central counting station of the EC subsector elections.

2006, we were advised by the management of HKCEC that their regular client, which had reserved the venue concerned for an international trade show during the period, could not re-schedule the event. Thus, no suitable venue could be released to REO for use for the intended booking period.

### **AsiaWorld-Expo**

7. In such circumstances, we came to the view in February 2006 that AsiaWorld-Expo was the only available and suitable venue to serve as the polling and counting station for the CE election. We successfully booked Hall 2 of AsiaWorld-Expo for the period of 22 to 27 March 2007.

8. At the same time, we asked HKCEC to monitor the situation at HKCEC and reserve a suitable venue for us, if any relevant user cancels his booking. Our contact with HKCEC in the past few weeks showed that there was no such cancellation that would make available a suitable venue for us for the period concerned.

9. We note Panel Members' concern that this was the first time the AsiaWorld-Expo would be used as a polling and counting station for an election and Election Committee members might not be familiar with the location. After careful consideration, the Electoral Affairs Commission has decided to extend the time for the first round of voting in the case of a contested election, and the polling hours in the case of an uncontested election, from one to two hours, ie from 9:00 – 10:00am to 9:00 – 11:00am. We will also provide the necessary information on the transportation arrangement available to facilitate electors and members of the public to travel to AsiaWorld-Expo.

Yours sincerely,

(LAM Man-ho)  
Chief Electoral Officer

c.c. Secretary for Constitutional Affairs