Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs

**Practical Arrangements for the
2008 Legislative Council Election**

INTRODUCTION

This paper sets out the key electoral arrangements for the 2008 Legislative Council ("LegCo") Election to be held on 7 September 2008.

BACKGROUND

2.   The Electoral Affairs Commission ("EAC") is a statutory and independent body responsible for the conduct and supervision of elections. The EAC, supported by the Registration and Electoral Office ("REO"), is making preparations for various electoral arrangements for the 2008 LegCo Election. The Panel was consulted on the counting arrangements and the venue of the central counting station in December 2007 and February 2008 respectively. Other key electoral arrangements are set out in the following paragraphs.

NOMINATION PERIOD, POLLING DATE AND POLLING HOURS

3.   In accordance with section 6(1) of the Legislative Council Ordinance (Cap. 542), the Chief Executive has specified 7 September 2008 as the date for holding the general election to elect

Members for the fourth term LegCo. The relevant notice was published in the gazette on 22 February 2008. Same as the arrangements for recent LegCo and District Council ("DC") elections, the poll will be conducted from 7:30 am to 10:30 pm. The nomination period is scheduled for 19 July to 1 August 2008.

NUMBER AND ALLOCATION OF POLLING STATIONS

4. In the 2007 Final Register, there were about 3.29 million electors registered for the geographical constituencies ("GCs"). The 2008 voter registration drive has commenced in early April 2008 and the deadline for application for registration is 16 May 2008. The final voter registration figure for the upcoming LegCo Election will be available when the 2008 Final Register of GC electors is published by 18 July. Based on a guesstimate of about 3.35 million registered electors and with about 520 polling stations to be set up for the 2008 LegCo Election, there will be an average of about 6,400 electors assigned to each polling station. The overall situation is similar to the figures for the 2007 DC Election and 2007 LegCo Hong Kong Island GC By-election.

POLLING ARRANGEMENTS

5. As in previous LegCo Elections, in order to facilitate electors who are eligible to cast votes for both GC and functional constituency ("FC"), we propose to adopt combined polling arrangements. Thus, an eligible elector can cast both the GC vote and the FC vote at the same polling station. Different ballot boxes will be provided in the polling stations for receiving the GC and FC votes separately.

BALLOT PAPERS AND BALLOT BOXES

6.   Similar to the arrangements in the 2004 LegCo Election and 2007 LegCo Hong Kong Island GC By-election, candidates will be allowed to have certain specified particulars relating to them printed on the ballot papers.　These particulars include the candidate's photograph and the political party or organisation which supports his candidacy.

7.   To ensure that sufficient ballot boxes will be provided to the polling stations for holding the votes cast for GCs and FCs respectively, we have carefully and thoroughly tested the ballot boxes for use in the 2008 LegCo Election.　There will be an adequate provision of ballot boxes.

GREEN MEASURES: REDUCTION OF PAPER CONSUMPTION ON ELECTION-RELATED MATERIALS

(1) Address labels for candidates to send Election Advertisements

8.   In response to appeals from the public and green groups on the reduction of paper consumption on election-related materials, and taking into account relevant recommendations from the EAC in the reports on the two elections in 2007, we need to consider carefully whether the following measure should be taken in the coming election.

9.   In previous elections, candidates were provided with a

set of address labels printed with electors' names and addresses on an individual basis for sending election advertisement ("EA").We have explored the possibility of providing address labels of electors to candidates on a household rather than individual basis.

10.   Such a proposal would cut down the amount of paper used by candidates for printing the EAs. On the other hand, we should take into account the following considerations:

(a) First and foremost, the rights of individual electors to access EAs must be respected and protected. The ability of individual electors to peruse the election platform of candidates is a fundamental principle of our elections and must not be compromised;

(b) if EAs are delivered on a household basis, it is uncertain whether electors can have timely access to the EA due to the time required for circulation among electors within a household. In case the EA is held up by one of the electors, other electors in the household may not be able to have access to it;

(c) some electors reside in residential establishments where a communal address is shared by individual electors (e.g. tenement flats, elderly homes, etc.). EAs should be delivered to these electors on an individual basis. Whilst in some cases it may be clear from their names or information kept by relevant departments, (e.g. registered elderly homes), it may not be possible to ascertain this in other cases (e.g. tenement flats). It would not be

feasible to identify all such establishments to ensure that EAs are delivered to the electors concerned on an individual basis.

11.   If we were to pursue this matter, we must work out arrangements to address the issues mentioned above properly. We would welcome Members' views on the way forward.

12.   Separately, under previous arrangements, address labels were made available to candidates upon submission of nomination forms. However, it is noted that in the 2007 DC Election and 2007 LegCo Hong Kong Island GC By-election, about 5% and 25% of the candidates respectively had not made use of the address labels. To reduce wastage, candidates of future elections will only be provided with a set of address labels upon request.

(2) Printing of electoral documents

13.   Electoral documents such as candidates' introductory leaflets and ballot papers will, as in the past, be printed with environmentally friendly ink. Subject to technical considerations, we will make our best endeavour to use recycled paper or paper made from sustainable forest. We will also choose paper lighter in weight wherever possible. For example, candidates' introductory leaflets will be printed on paper of 80 gsm as used in the 2007 DC Election and LegCo By-election instead of 100 gsm used in the 2004 LegCo Election. This can save 20% of the paper used for the printing of the candidates' introductory leaflets.

Format of the candidates' introductory leaflet

14.　　As a further step to reduce paper consumption, it is proposed that the space allocated for each FC candidate in the introductory leaflet be reduced from half of an A4 page to a quarter of an A4 page, whereas that for each GC candidate list should be reduced from two A4 pages to one page.　This is expected to save about 16 million pages of A4 paper.

OTHER RELATED MEASURES

15.　　Other key measures which will be put in place to ensure the smooth conduct of the 2008 LegCo Election include:

(a)　Media centre: A Media Centre will be set up inside the central counting station at the Hongkong International Trade & Exhibition Centre, to facilitate the dissemination of voter turnout statistics and election results to the candidates, the media and the public. Any media announcements will also be made available at the Media Centre.　Furthermore, the declaration of all GC and FC election results will be made at the Media Centre.

(b)　Organisation and set-up of the Central Command Centre ("CCC"): The CCC will be set up in the REO office in the Guardian House on the polling day.　It will be supervised by the Chief Electoral Officer of the REO, and all units of the Centre will be accommodated in the same place to facilitate communication and

coordination.

(c) <u>Compilation of electoral statistics and counting results:</u> To facilitate the reporting by each polling station of the hourly voter turnout figures in respect of the GC concerned and 28 FCs, the Presiding Officers of polling stations will use facsimile machines to report relevant statistics and counting results to the statistical information centre to be set up inside the CCC. The same method was used in the 2006 Election Committee Subsector Elections and was proven efficient and reliable. The voter turnout figures will be made available to the public on an hourly basis through press releases, notices at the Media Centre and the dedicated website for the 2008 LegCo Election.

(d) <u>Release of interim and final counting results</u>: As with the 2004 LegCo Election and 2007 LegCo Hong Kong Island GC By-election, to enhance transparency of the counting process, we plan to release interim counting results at the Media Centre, on the dedicated election website and by press release until all election results are announced.

(e) <u>Staff recruitment</u>: We aim to recruit 17,000 civil servants from various bureaux and departments to carry out polling and vote counting duties on the polling day.

(f) <u>Staff training</u>: Briefing sessions will be arranged for electoral staff on the polling and counting procedures

and arrangements including hands-on practice of counting duties. Polling management training which includes crisis management, quality polling service, training on emotional quotient and experience sharing workshop will be organized for staff at the supervisory level. Staff who are deployed to compile statistical returns on the polling day will be provided with specialized training on statistical work.

(g) <u>Contingency planning</u>: An emergency depot will be set up in each of the 18 administrative districts to provide quick replenishment of supplies to the polling stations where necessary. Each emergency depot will be equipped with vehicles for urgent deployment if the need arises. We will also draw up a comprehensive contingency plan to deal with various incidents on the polling day.

ADVICE SOUGHT

16.   Members are invited to express views on the arrangements set out in the paper.

Registration and Electoral Office
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