

(Translation)

**Speech by the Secretary for the Civil Service at the
Special Meeting of the Finance Committee in the Legislative Council
On 23 March 2009**

Madam Chairman and Members,

In paragraph 24 of his Budget Speech delivered last month, the Financial Secretary recapitulated the initiatives the Government has introduced earlier to counter the financial crisis, including recruitment of civil servants. Separately, the 2009-10 Draft Estimates of Expenditure project an increase in the civil service establishment. Today, I am going to brief Members on the latest development in this respect and other related matters.

2. First, **the recruitment of civil servants.** As announced by the Chief Executive in December 2008 as part of the Government's efforts to preserve employment, bureaux/departments (B/Ds) are expediting recruitment to fill existing and anticipated civil service vacancies arising from retirement, resignation, etc. and newly created civil service posts and those that will be created in 2009-10. We aim to recruit suitable individuals to fill some 7 700 civil service posts from December 2008 to March 2010. These posts straddle various academic and professional entry requirements (covering below-Form Five requirements, Form Five qualification, post-secondary qualifications and degree/professional qualifications) and cover a wide range of job categories (such as disciplined services jobs, clerical and professional jobs, etc). As at end-February 2009, B/Ds have already filled some 1 400 vacancies, and offered appointments to another some 1 200 suitable candidates.

3. Second, **control of the civil service establishment.** The Government is committed to continuing to keep the civil service establishment under control in order to maintain a lean and efficient civil service. This is in keeping with the principle of prudent management of public resources. New civil service posts will only be created when the operational need is fully justified, when the work involved cannot be undertaken by re-deployment of existing staff, and when alternative modes of service delivery (e.g. outsourcing or hire of services) are considered inappropriate.

4. In view of the new initiatives to be pursued and the increasing demand on public services, we consider it justified to allow a moderate increase of about 0.9% (about 1 530 posts) in the civil service establishment in 2009-10. Subject to approval of the Legislative Council of the 2009-10 Draft Estimates, the civil service establishment is estimated to stand at 165 703 posts by end-March 2010.

5. Third, **the development of an improved civil service pay adjustment mechanism.** It has long been our civil service pay policy to offer adequate remuneration to attract, retain and motivate staff of a suitable calibre to provide the public with quality service. In addition, we subscribe to the principle of broad comparability between civil service and private sector pay in order to ensure that the civil service remuneration is considered fair by both the civil servants and the public. In pursuance of the established mechanism, we will conduct the 2009 annual Pay Trend Survey and the 2009 Starting Salaries Survey.

6. Fourth, **civil service training.** The civil service is the backbone of the SAR Government. We are committed to providing civil servants at all levels with training to update their skills and knowledge necessary for providing quality services to the public. We will continue to organise senior leadership development courses and ensure that their contents will keep pace with the times.

We will also provide more training opportunities on national studies and enhance the knowledge and understanding of the Basic Law by civil servants of different ranks. At the same time, we will continue to work closely with departments to support them in their human resources development and management efforts, focusing on special training needs such as supervisory accountability, quality customer service and performance management.

7. Madam Chairman, the civil service is the backbone of the Government. It contributes to the effective governance and stability of Hong Kong. In the face of the current global financial crisis, it is important that we maintain an efficient and effective civil service to serve and work together with the community of Hong Kong. While continuing to keep the size of the civil service establishment under control, the Civil Service Bureau will work with B/Ds to ensure that there is adequate and appropriate manpower resources to implement policy initiatives and meet the community's increasing demand for public services.
