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**Summary of RTHK Programme Staff Union’s response on the
Public Consultation Paper on the New Radio Television Hong Kong:
Fulfilling its Mission as a Public Service Broadcaster**

1. We disagree with the Government’s decision to maintain RTHK as a government department to provide “public service broadcasting”. This is because RTHK, as a media organization, which enjoys editorial independence, is granted the role of monitoring the government. But this contradicts with the station’s status as a government department. According to the definition by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, a public service broadcaster should be independent from the government, political party and commercial organization. Clearly, the government’s decision fails to meet that definition. Even in the review of Public Service Broadcasting of Hong Kong, Mr. Raymond Wong noted that a public service broadcaster must retain independence. In March 2006, the School of Journalism and Communication of the Chinese University of Hong Kong released the finding of its survey. 57% of the respondents agreed the government to hike off RTHK. Therefore, we believe RTHK should eventually be independent from the government.
2. On the four public purposes proposed in the Consultation Paper, the Union is of the view that they cannot fully reflect the important role of monitoring the government that RTHK has been playing. The reality is the Hong Kong public supports us to play such a role. According to the survey by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 81% of the respondents think RTHK should monitor and criticize government policy. In response to this, the Union believes the role of monitoring government policy should be added to the four public purposes, in a bid to act in the spirit of public service broadcasting.
3. On corporate governance, the Consultation Paper proposed to set up a Board of Advisors to be appointed by the Chief Executive to advise the Director of Broadcasting on RTHK’s editorial direction and programme standard. The Union disagrees with the creation of such a Board. We are worried that this Board of Advisors will intervene editorial independence in future. The composition and the appointment process of the board, in our view, lack general support. Its function also overlaps with the existing RTHK Programme Advisory Panel, redundant to the current structure. The Consultation Paper mentioned the Board of Advisors will not have any executive power. However, judging from item 3.5 (a) of the paper, the Union believes the Director of Broadcasting, who is also the Chief Editor of the station, will find it hard to defend editorial independence.



4. About the Charter, the Union welcomes the government proposal to elevate the Framework of Agreement to a Charter and signed by the Chief Secretary for Administration. We agree the Framework of Agreement should be a blueprint for the Charter and its top priority is to maintain RTHK's editorial independence.
5. The Union disagrees with the 12 performance indicators proposed in the Consultation Paper. We think they are simply far too complicated and difficult for the public to understand. They mix up the performance evaluation as a public service broadcaster and as a government department. We fear that some of the 12 performance indicators will lead to intervention by the Board of Advisors in the daily operations of the station. The Union proposes to adopt and modify the performance measurement framework set by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). It is based around four drivers of public values: Reach, Quality, Impact and Value for Money to assess its performance.
6. On future mode of service delivery, the Union, in principle, agrees to develop digital broadcasting and set up a digital terrestrial television channel. We believe staff members will be happy to take on the challenge. But the Consultation Paper did not take into account about the current dynamic in the media industry of "one dominating station". If we only forecast the future market trend by just looking at the popularity rate of digital broadcasting, the result is deemed to be inaccurate. The Union thinks RTHK's programmes should be gradually phase out from the two free-to-air TV channels. But we should let the public to have their say on this to avoid RTHK being marginalized.
7. On "New Programming Opportunity", item 7.5 on relaying television and radio broadcasts by the China Central Television and China National Radio, the Union thinks this is unnecessary. It is because such broadcasts are already covered by the two free-to-air and pay TV channels. Such relays will also affect the copyrights agreement between CCTV and international content provider. We think it is worth considering on ways to reinforce partnership with international and national broadcasters, but not as the way proposed by the Consultation Paper.

RTHK Programme Staff Union

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