

For Information
on 19 March 2011

**Legislative Council Panel on Security
Police's Handling of Public Meetings and Public Processions**

Introduction

This paper provides information on the Police's handling of public meetings and public processions.

Handling of Public Meetings and Public Processions

2. The freedom and right of peaceful assembly and procession are enshrined in Article 27 of the Basic Law and Article 17 of section 8 of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance (Cap. 383). It is the Police's operational policy to strike a balance by facilitating all lawful and peaceful public meetings and processions on the one hand and on the other hand reducing the impact of public meetings and processions on other people or road users to ensure public safety and public order. In exercising their freedom of expression, participants of public meetings or processions should, under the premise of observing the Hong Kong law and without affecting public order, proceed in a peaceful and orderly manner.

3. Under the Public Order Ordinance (Cap. 245), any public meeting or procession the attendance of which exceeds the limit prescribed in the Ordinance, i.e. public meetings of more than 50 persons and public processions of more than 30 persons, should give notice to the Commissioner of Police (CP) not less than seven days prior to the intended event, and it can only be conducted if CP has not prohibited or objected to it. The notification should provide basic information including the date of public meeting or procession, time of commencement and duration, location or route, theme and estimated number of participants, etc. CP may impose condition(s) on a notified public meeting or procession as reasonably necessary to ensure order of the event and public safety. Organisers may appeal to the statutory Appeal Board on Public Meetings and Processions if they consider CP's decision unreasonable.

4. Generally speaking, upon receipt of a notification of a public meeting or procession, the Police will maintain an active and close

communication with the organiser to offer advice and assistance. Police community relations officers may also be present during an event as appropriate to act as a channel of communication between the organiser and the Field Commander. In assessing the crowd/traffic management measures and manpower required for maintaining public safety and public order during the events, the Police will make reference to the information provided by the organiser, past experience in handling similar events as well as other operational considerations.

5. The Police have a duty to take lawful measures to regulate public meetings and processions as appropriate to ensure public order and public safety. On occasions where the law is, or is likely to be, violated during public meetings or processions by acts of individuals, especially when there are acts which may cause danger to others or lead to a breach of the public order, the Police will make professional judgement based on the assessment at scene, and if intervention is required, issue verbal warnings to the person concerned when circumstances permit. Depending on whether the person involved has observed the warnings and ceased the illegal or possibly illegal acts, and whether his acts would lead to a breach of public order, or even endanger public safety, the Police will take appropriate actions according to the circumstances.

6. From 2008 to 2010, a total of about 11 000 public meetings and about 3 150 public processions were held in Hong Kong (or an average of 13 events daily). The Police will continue to communicate with, and secure the support of, event organisers so as to ensure that the public events are peacefully and orderly conducted.

Security Bureau
Hong Kong Police Force
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