

For Information
on 5 July 2011

**Legislative Council Panel on Security
Police's Crowd Control Arrangements in relation to
Public Meetings and Public Processions**

Introduction

This paper provides information on the Police's crowd control measures for public meetings and public processions.

Handling of Public Meetings and Public Processions

2. The freedom and right of procession and peaceful assembly are enshrined in Article 27 of the Basic Law and 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 expressing their views, 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, and the corresponding condition(s) imposed will be stated explicitly beforehand in the "letter of no objection" issued to the organiser. 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. The Police have a duty to take lawful measures to regulate public meetings and processions as appropriate to ensure public order and public safety.

Crowd Control Measures

5. The Police will make reference to the number of participants and information provided by organisers, past experience in handling similar events as well as other operational considerations when assessing the management measures required for the crowd, traffic and public transport services and manpower requirement for maintaining public safety and public order during the events. The Police will devise appropriate crowd control measures in advance, including coordinating with the Transport Department on diversions of traffic and public transport services and related contingency measures, special pedestrian flow arrangements, and arranging for the participants' entry into the venue or access to the starting point of the procession via different routes, etc. The Police will also liaise with the organisers when special circumstances so warrant, such as suggesting to the organisers the use of nearby locations to better accommodate participants of the events.

6. In the course of public events, the Police maintain close liaison with the organisers and their marshals. To ensure that public processions and public meetings can be conducted in a safe and orderly manner, the Field Commander will assess the situation at scene and, where circumstances warrant, implement ad-hoc crowd control measures.

Way Forward

7. 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.