

FACT SHEET

Creation of the posts of Under Secretaries and Political Assistants

1. Background

1.1 The policy bureaux of the Government Secretariat have been re-organized four times since the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, including the introduction of the Accountability System for Principal Officials in 2002, and the re-organization of the policy bureaux in 2007.¹ The Administration subsequently created two additional layers of political appointment positions (i.e. Under Secretaries and Political Assistants) in addition to the Principal Officials under the Accountability System, and appointed a number of Under Secretaries and Political Assistants in 2008 and 2009.

1.2 The Panel on Constitutional Affairs will hold a special meeting on 15 May 2012 to discuss the proposed new structure of the Government Secretariat to be implemented with effect from 1 July 2012. To facilitate members' deliberation, this fact sheet sets out a chronology of events relating to the creation of the posts of Under Secretaries and Political Assistants between 2006 and 2009 (see **Table** below).

¹ See the information note on "Re-organization of the Government Secretariat" prepared by the Research Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat, LegCo Paper No. IN25/11-12.

Table – Chronology of events relating to the creation of the posts of Under Secretaries and Political Assistants

Date(s)	Events
From 1 July 2002	The Accountability System for Principal Officials was implemented. The Principal Officials comprised three Secretaries of Department and 11 Directors of Bureau.
26 July 2006	<p>The Administration issued the Consultation Document on Further Development of the Political Appointment System ("Consultation Document"), proposing the creation of two additional layers of political appointment positions (i.e. Under Secretaries and Political Assistants) and launching public consultation on the proposal.</p> <p>The Administration explained that the creation of political appointment positions with different layers was to provide Principal Officials with additional support to meet the demands of people-based governance, maintain the political neutrality of the civil service, and provide political talents with a more comprehensive career path.</p>
26 and 31 July 2006	The Panel on Constitutional Affairs held two meetings to discuss the proposal in the Consultation Document for the creation of the posts of Under Secretaries and Political Assistants. During the meetings, some members questioned that the creation of these new posts would neither enable the Administration to better coordinate the work in policy formulation and use resources effectively, nor would it be conducive to the grooming of political talents.
30 November 2006	The four-month public consultation on the Consultation Document ended. During the consultation period, the Administration briefed the media, the Legislative Council, civil service groups, and the chairmen and vice chairmen of the District Councils on the content of and rationale for the proposal of creating the posts of Under Secretaries and Political Assistants. The Administration also exchanged views on the proposal with members of the Commission on Strategic Development.
1 July 2007	The policy bureaux of the Government Secretariat were re-organized. After the re-organization, the Principal Officials comprised three Secretaries of Department and 12 Directors of Bureau.
17 October 2007	After considering the views received during the consultation period, the Administration issued the Report on Further Development of the Political Appointment System ("Report") which proposed the creation of a new post of Political Assistant for the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary respectively, and the creation of one position of Under Secretary and one position of Political Assistant in each Policy Bureau (except the Civil Service Bureau).

Table – Chronology of events relating to the creation of the posts of Under Secretaries and Political Assistants (cont'd)

Date(s)	Events
23 October 2007	At its meeting, the Panel on Constitutional Affairs discussed the proposal in the Report for the creation of the posts of Under Secretaries and Political Assistants.
28 November 2007	The Establishment Subcommittee endorsed the proposal for the creation of 11 posts of Under Secretaries and 13 posts of Political Assistants under the political appointment system and their corresponding remuneration packages with effect from 1 April 2008.
14 December 2007	The Finance Committee approved the proposal for the creation of the posts of Under Secretaries and Political Assistants which involved a total annual expenditure of approximately HK\$60 million.
March to April 2008	<p>The Administration suggested amending Schedule 6 to the <i>Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance</i> (Cap. 1), by "adding Under Secretary (副局長) to the list of public officers who are empowered to signify the exercise of statutory powers and the performance of statutory duties by the Chief Executive".</p> <p>To give effect to the above suggestion, the Administration gazetted the <i>Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance (Amendment of Schedule 6) Order 2008</i> on 7 March 2008, which was then tabled at the Legislative Council on 12 March 2008.</p> <p>A member was opposed to the proposal of further development of the political appointment system, and therefore moved a motion at the Council meeting on 30 April 2008 to repeal that <i>Order</i>. However, the motion was not carried.</p>
20 May 2008	The Chief Executive appointed the first batch of eight Under Secretaries respectively to the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, the Education Bureau, the Environment Bureau, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the Food and Health Bureau, the Home Affairs Bureau, and the Transport and Housing.

Table – Chronology of events relating to the creation of the posts of Under Secretaries and Political Assistants (cont'd)

Date(s)	Events
22 May 2008	The Chief Executive appointed the first batch of nine Political Assistants to work respectively with the Financial Secretary, the Secretary for Development, the Secretary for Education, the Secretary for the Environment, the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, the Secretary for Food and Health, the Secretary for Home Affairs, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, and the Secretary for Security.
Beginning from mid to late May 2008	In view of heated discussion about the appointments of the Under Secretaries and Political Assistants in the community, including the issues of remuneration packages and nationality requirement, the Establishment Subcommittee, the Panel on Constitutional Affairs and the Legislative Council deliberated such issues at their meetings.
22 October 2009	The Chief Executive appointed two Under Secretaries, namely the Under Secretary for Security and the Under Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs.

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