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23 May 2017

Ms Joanne MAK
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road,
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms MAK,

**Panel on Constitutional Affairs
Motion passed at the meeting on 19 April 2017**

Thank you for your letter dated 24 April 2017. The response of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau to the motion under agenda item V “Briefing by the Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission” — passed by the Panel on 19 April 2017 is at the Annex please.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. C. Cheung', written over a horizontal line.

(D. C. CHEUNG)

for Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

Panel on Constitutional Affairs

Motion passed under agenda item V

**“Briefing by the Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission”
at the meeting on 19 April 2017**

This Panel urges the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau to strengthen the provision of support for the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission (“EOC”), and requests that adequate financial resources be expeditiously provided for EOC’s Ethnic Minority Unit so as to rectify the unfair situation currently faced by ethnic minorities.

Response of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

Each year, the Government provides a subvention in the form of lump sum allocation to the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) for it to draw up its estimates of operating expenditures under the principles of prudent fiscal management and efficient and economical use of resources. The subvention covers expenditures on manpower and salaries, office accommodation expenses, and expenditures for implementing the anti-discrimination ordinances, etc. For the past five years, there has been an increase in annual subvention to the EOC after deducting the one-off provision. The total subvention for the EOC in 2017-18 is \$115.5 million, representing a net increase of about \$8.3 million (an increase of 7.7%) compared with the revised estimate of 2016-17. Furthermore, according to the information provided by the EOC, the estimated expenditure on publicity and public education (including manpower expenditure) for 2017-18 is \$23.86 million; about 25% of which (i.e. over \$5.9 million) is used for that on racial discrimination. The Government also provides non-recurrent funding to the EOC. For instance, the Government will provide in 2017-18 a one-off provision of \$9.5 million to support the EOC’s proposed expenditure on office relocation and fitting-out work.

2. Starting from 2014-15, the Government has been providing a funding of \$4.69 million each year to the EOC for enhancing publicity and education on

the Race Discrimination Ordinance. To this end, the EOC has set up an Ethnic Minorities Unit (the Unit) with 7 full-time staff. According to the information provided by the EOC, the major works of the Unit include:

- (a) On education for ethnic minorities, the EOC will continue to deliberate and gauge the views of stakeholders and education professionals on support measures for non-Chinese speaking students through focus group meetings. It will also relay issues identified to the Education Bureau and the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities of the Legislative Council and suggest follow-up actions. In addition, the EOC has published a guidance booklet titled “Promotion of Racial Integration and Prevention of Racial Discrimination in Schools” for schools and parents in order to promote fairness in admission of students and racial integration in schools. This booklet promotes the application of the RDO in school setting with particular emphasis on the language policy in admission of students and the building of an integrated learning environment. The Unit has distributed copies of the booklet to all primary schools, secondary schools and kindergartens in the territory, and has conducted briefing sessions for teachers and school administrators to ensure that they understand the content of the guidance booklet as well as the principles of application. In 2017-18, the Unit will enhance on-site training for schools and parents, and draw up a simple guide to further facilitate schools to formulate and implement policies and measures on equality and integration.
- (b) On employment of ethnic minorities, the EOC has all along been liaising with the Labour Department and the Employees Retraining Board and has put forward a series of recommendations in relation to employment support service and training. The Unit is following up on the implementation of the recommended measures and is planning to approach the Vocational Training Council, the Construction Industry Council and the Occupational Safety and Health Council to enhance support in the planning of courses for ethnic minority students and strengthen promotional efforts on occupational safety and labour protection. On the other hand, the EOC has been proactively promoting cultural diversity in the workplace for the commercial sector, encouraging local enterprises to employ ethnic minorities as an example to inspire small and medium enterprises to consider employing ethnic minorities as well. Last year, efforts were made by the Unit to liaise with employers (including airlines, bus

companies, homes for the elderly, etc.) who intended to start engaging or employing more ethnic minorities. The Unit conducted briefing sessions for these employers so that they could brief ethnic minority youths and career masters/mistresses of secondary schools on the career prospects of the posts and businesses concerned. The EOC will encourage more employers of different businesses to follow suit and is planning to establish referral and matching platforms in collaboration with non-government organisations serving ethnic minorities.

- (c) On access to services by ethnic minorities, the EOC has gathered case examples from non-government organisations on the difficulties encountered by ethnic minorities in accessing public services. It has also reflected to the Housing Department, Labour Department, Social Welfare Department (SWD) and Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency on language barriers faced by ethnic minorities as well as the lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of the departments/agencies in handling such cases, and in this connection held meetings with the departments/agencies concerned to deliberate on improvement initiatives. After intervention, the departments/agencies concerned have introduced various improvement measures, including drawing up or updating guidelines for making referrals for interpretation services, translating some of the application forms into ethnic minority languages as samples, enhancing staff training and employing more ethnic minorities. The Unit will continue to keep track of the progress and has since November last year held over 10 staff training sessions for these departments/agencies to enhance their awareness of non-discrimination and sensitivity to cultural diversity. The Unit will further approach other government departments and public organisations (such as the Hospital Authority and public bus companies, etc.) to encourage them to review their existing policies and initiatives, and strengthen the elements of respect for equal opportunities and cultural diversity. On the other hand, the EOC is concerned about the problems encountered by ethnic minorities in applying for banking services and renting flats. The EOC worked with the Hong Kong Institute of Bankers and Estate Agents Authority last year to organise training for banking practitioners and estate agents to enhance their awareness on non-discrimination. The Unit will continue its training efforts and is planning to further take forward promotion and education initiatives through different platforms (such as online platform).

3. The EOC is an independent statutory organization. We will continue to maintain communication and cooperation with the EOC. We also hope that the EOC can make prudent use of the resources to discharge its functions and duties effectively.

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
May 2017