

**Opening Statement by
Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 9 April 2019**

Chairman,

I wish to brief Members on the main points of the estimates of expenditure of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (“CMAB”) in 2019-20.

Estimates of Expenditure of CMAB

2. In 2019-20, CMAB is allocated \$766.8 million. The focus of work for this financial year is as follows -

(I) Electoral Arrangements

3. The Government will continue to work closely with the Electoral Affairs Commission (“EAC”) to ensure that each public election will be conducted in a fair, open and honest manner in strict accordance with the Basic Law and the relevant legislation.

Amendments to Electoral Laws

4. In preparation for public elections in the election cycle commencing this year, the Government is examining the relevant electoral laws with reference to the experience of the last election cycle, and has implemented some improvement measures, among which the Electoral Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2018 has been passed by the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) January this year and has come into effect.

5. Besides, we have already introduced another amendment Bill into the LegCo last month, which proposes to introduce technical amendments concerning arrangements in the Elections (Corrupt and Illegal Conduct) Ordinance (Cap. 554)¹, and various electoral procedures in LegCo elections and other public elections.

¹ Such as raising the limits for candidates to rectify minor errors or omissions in their election returns under the de minimis arrangement.

2019 District Council (“DC”) Ordinary Election

6. The 2019 DC Ordinary Election will be held on 24 November to elect 452 members to the DCs. The EAC will, in mid-2019, conduct a public consultation to solicit views on the “Proposed Guidelines on Election-related Activities in respect of the District Council Election” (“the Guidelines”), and consult the LegCo Panel on Constitutional Affairs on the Guidelines and the practical arrangements for the election.

2019 Voter Registration (“VR”)

7. The 2019 VR campaign commences in April. Starting from last year, electors applying to change their registered address are required to submit address proof at the same time. This will facilitate the verification of the electors’ address information by the Registration and Electoral Office (“REO”), thereby enhancing the accuracy of the registers of electors. Electors can use the “Online Voter Information Enquiry System” to verify their registration status and particulars. REO will continue to implement checking measures and carry out statutory inquiry process. If any person is suspected of providing false information for voter registration, the REO will refer the case to the law enforcement agencies for follow up action and investigation in accordance with the established procedures.

(II) Promoting the Constitution and the Basic Law

8. In 2019-20, the CMAB will continue to set aside about \$17 million to promote public understanding of the "one country, two systems" principle, the Constitution and the Basic Law through various means, including organising or sponsoring various types of promotional activities.

(III) Rights of the Individual

9. In 2019-20, subventions to the Equal Opportunities Commission (“EOC”) and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (“PCPD”) will remain the major parts of the estimated total provision in human rights under the Bureau. CMAB will continue to carry out the legislative, promotional and educational work in certain areas.

EOC and PCPD

10. EOC is responsible for the implementation of four anti-discrimination ordinances. The total subvention for the EOC in 2019-20 is \$114.5 million. PCPD will continue to raise public awareness in protecting and respecting personal data, as well as encourage public and private organisations to embrace personal data protection as an essential part of corporate governance. In 2019-20, we propose to allocate \$78.57 million to PCPD.

Discrimination Law Review

11. We introduced the Discrimination Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2018 (“the Bill”) to the LegCo in late 2018 so as to implement eight of the recommendations set out in EOC’s Submission to the Government on the DLR that are less complex and controversial. The Bill was gazetted on 30 November last year and presented to the LegCo for first and second reading on 12 December. At present, LegCo has formed a Bills Committee to scrutinise the Bill. The Government will listen and consider carefully views from the Bills Committee and look forward to early passage of the Bill.

12. CMAB will continue to study the remaining 19 recommendations of priority (including issues identified by the EOC as requiring further research, consultation and education²) and follow up as appropriate.

Promotion of Children’s Rights

13. In 2019-20, we have earmarked about \$1.10 million (excluding manpower cost) for implementing programmes for enhancing children’s rights promotion.

Anti-discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity

14. We are actively taking forward the strategies and measures recommended by the Advisory Group on Eliminating Discrimination against Sexual Minorities. First of all, we have enhanced public

² For instance, providing protection from discrimination on the ground of citizenship and residency status in the Race Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 602) (to address discrimination against new immigrants and tourists from the Mainland China); and providing protection from discrimination on the ground of cohabiting relationships.

education and publicity efforts, including broadcasting the promotional video on different platforms to promote the message of “Eliminate Discrimination, Embrace Inclusion”, as well as encouraging more organisations to adopt the Code of Practice against Discrimination in Employment on Ground of Sexual Orientation (“the Code”) through multiple channels to provide equal opportunities for people of different sexual orientations. At present, more than 350 public and private organisations employing over 550 000 employees have adopted the Code.

15. As some sexual minorities expressed that they were unable to access information such as counselling and support services, we subsidised a 24-hour hotline operated by the Tung Wah Groups of Hospitals for supporting sexual minorities. The hotline has been launched since January last year to provide prompt support, counselling and referral services for sexual minorities and their families with a view to alleviating their difficulties and stress faced in the daily life.

16. We launched the training resources to enhance sensitivity of medical and healthcare professionals towards sexual minorities in December last year. A briefing session for representatives from different medical and healthcare professional bodies was held in January and a train-the-trainer session was held for Hospital Authority and Department of Health in late March this year with a view to enhancing their knowledge and awareness towards sexual minorities. In addition to medical and healthcare professionals, training resources will also be prepared for social workers, human resources professionals and teachers.

17. We are studying the experience of other jurisdictions in tackling discrimination through administrative and legislative measures and expect to complete it in first half of this year. The findings will provide more information to facilitate more in-depth discussion in the community on the issue of whether legislation should be introduced to protect people of different sexual orientations and transgenders against discrimination. We are also drawing up a charter on non-discrimination of sexual minorities for voluntary adoption by relevant organisations in the domains of provision of goods, facilities and services; disposal and management of premises; employment; and education.

(IV) Mainland and Taiwan Affairs

18. The HKSAR Government has fully enhanced the networks and functions of its Mainland Offices. At present, the HKSAR Government has established one office each at the eastern, southern, western, northern

and central regions of the Mainland. Each office has established at least two liaison units, making up to a total of 11 liaison units.

Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

19. The development of the Greater Bay Area is a key national development strategy for China's further reform and opening up. Through further deepening cooperation amongst Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, the objectives of the development of the Greater Bay Area are to promote coordinated economic development in the Greater Bay Area, leverage the complementary advantages of the three places, and develop an international first-class bay area for living, working and travelling.

20. The Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("Outline Development Plan") promulgated by the Central Government in February set out the directions guiding the development of the Greater Bay Area. It also signified the development of the Greater Bay Area had entered into a stage of full-fledged implementation. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("SAR") Government shall follow the guiding directions in the Outline Development Plan and proactively co-operate with relevant central ministries, the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Macao SAR Government in jointly taking forward work relating to the development of the Greater Bay Area.

21. To take forward the development of the Greater Bay Area more effectively, the Chief Executive has established a high-level Steering Committee for the Development of the Greater Bay Area, with her as the chairperson and its membership comprising all Secretaries of Department and Directors of Bureau. The Steering Committee will be responsible for the overall co-ordination of matters relating to Hong Kong SAR's participation in the development of the Greater Bay Area. In 2019-20, CMAB will also set up a Greater Bay Area Development Office and appoint a Commissioner for the Development of the Greater Bay Area to implement the relevant work.

22. The Office will co-ordinate with relevant central ministries/departments, the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Macao SAR Government, as well as the relevant bureaux/departments of the Hong Kong SAR Government, and formulate annual work priorities to take forward the development of the Greater Bay Area. The Office will also carry out promotion and publicity work and disseminate information to deepen the understanding of the public and industries on the development of the Greater Bay Area. Meanwhile, the Office will

maintain close liaison with Members of the LegCo, industries, business associations, professional bodies and relevant stakeholders to gauge their views on the effective implementation of the Outline Development Plan to ensure that the relevant measures can best meet the needs of various sectors of the community.

Regional Co-operation

23. We will continue to deepen regional cooperation through our cooperation mechanisms with the Pan-Pearl River Delta region, Shanghai, Beijing, Fujian and Sichuan, and promote regional cooperation with the other provinces and municipalities by adopting a pragmatic approach and launching initiatives once they are ready. We will foster exchanges and cooperation between Hong Kong and the Mainland in various areas, including trade, culture, finance, innovation and technology, and training of professional talents, with a view to opening up more opportunities for people of the two places.

Facilitation Measures for Hong Kong people in the Mainland

24. Since August 2017, the relevant central authorities have announced a number of policy measures to facilitate Hong Kong residents studying, working and living in the Mainland. The measures include allowing Hong Kong and Macao residents working in the Mainland to join the Housing Provident Fund; removing the requirement for Hong Kong and Macao residents working in the Mainland to apply for employment permits; and installing automatic ticket vending and issuing machines to read and verify Home Visit Re-entry Permits at train stations. The Regulations for Application of Residence Permit for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan Residents, as announced by the Central Government, have been implemented since 1 September last year. Hong Kong residents living in the Mainland who meet the relevant criteria can apply for residence permits. In future, the HKSAR Government will continue to actively reflect views of the Hong Kong people to the relevant Mainland authorities, with a view to striving for more facilitation measures for Hong Kong people and their smooth implementation at the local level.

Development of Hong Kong – Taiwan Relations

25. We will continue to foster economic, trade and cultural exchanges and co-operation between Hong Kong and Taiwan. The Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office in Taiwan will liaise with key economic and cultural organisations as well as Hong Kong

people and businesses in Taiwan. Through various activities, the Office will also promote Hong Kong's strengths and introduce to the Taiwan community the developments of Hong Kong, thereby enhancing exchanges between the two places.

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
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