

**Opening remarks by the
Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee of the
Legislative Council on 7 April 2020**

Chairman,

I wish to brief Members on the main points of the estimates of expenditure of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (“CMAB”) in 2020-21.

Estimates of Expenditure of CMAB

2. In 2020-21, CMAB is allocated \$845.7 million. The focus of work for this financial year is as follows -

(I) Electoral Arrangements

Seventh-term Legislative Council general election

3. In preparation for the seventh-term Legislative Council (“LegCo”) general election to be held this year, the Government will continue to work closely with the Electoral Affairs Commission (“EAC”) to ensure that the election will be conducted in a fair, open and honest manner in accordance with the relevant legislation.

4. The EAC is conducting a 30-day public consultation on the “Proposed Guidelines on Election-related Activities in respect of the Legislative Council Election”, and plans to issue the finalised guidelines in mid-June.

2020 Voter Registration (“VR”)

5. The 2020 VR campaign has commenced in late-February. Eligible persons who have yet to register as electors are encouraged to register by the statutory deadline of 2 May.

(II) Promoting the Constitution and the Basic Law

6. To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the promulgation of the Basic Law and to enhance promotion of and education on the Constitution and the Basic Law, CMAB will set aside about \$23 million

in 2020-21 for organising or sponsoring various types of promotional activities through various means to enable the public to have a more comprehensive and thorough understanding of the “one country, two systems” principle, the Constitution and the Basic Law.

(III) Rights of the Individual

7. In 2020-21, 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 our work in various areas.

EOC and PCPD

8. EOC is responsible for implementation of four anti-discrimination ordinances. The total subvention for EOC in 2020-21 is \$133.9 million, up by 7.3% compared with the revised estimate of 2019-20 (i.e. \$124.8 million). The increase in financial provision for EOC in 2019-20 is mainly due to additional funding for EOC to enhance its work in various aspects, including its efforts in the prevention of sexual harassment.

9. 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. We will continue to support the work of PCPD in this area. In 2020-21, the allocation to PCPD is \$88.70 million, which is largely equivalent to the revised estimate of 2019-20.

Discrimination Law Review (“DLR”)

10. We introduced the Discrimination Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2018 (“2018 Bill”) to the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) in December 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 Bills Committee formed by LegCo has completed scrutiny of this Bill.

11. In response to views received in the course of scrutiny of the above-mentioned 2018 Bill, we also formulated legislative amendments to expand the protection afforded under the Sex Discrimination

Ordinance (Cap. 480) in order to outlaw harassment of breastfeeding women.

Anti-discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity

12. The Government has always been committed to promoting equal opportunities for people of different sexual orientations and transgenders, with a view to fostering in the community the culture and values of inclusiveness, mutual respect and non-discrimination. We have been broadcasting 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.

13. We are studying and analysing the experience of other jurisdictions in tackling discrimination against sexual minorities through administrative and legislative measures. The draft study report is being compiled. We plan to establish a communications platform to discuss with stakeholders and implement feasible anti-discrimination proposals based on the findings of the study. We are also drawing up a charter on non-discrimination of sexual minorities in the domains of provision of goods, facilities and services, disposal and management of premises, employment and education for voluntary adoption by service providers, with a view to enhancing the acceptance towards sexual minorities.

(IV) Mainland Affairs and Co-operation with Taiwan

14. In 2020-21, the financial provision for Mainland and Taiwan Offices is \$377.2 million, representing an increase of around \$57.80 million (about 18.1%) as compared with the revised estimate for 2019-20. This is mainly due to additional provision for stepping up promotional efforts. There is also an addition of \$20.80 million due to retirement of more civil servants and changes of personnel in the year; and an addition of \$37.21 million in the operational expenses of the Mainland and Taiwan Offices.

Support to Hong Kong residents on the Mainland affected by the epidemic

15. Since the occurrence of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) until

5 April this year, the five Mainland Offices of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“HKSAR”) had received about 2 800 requests for assistance relating to the epidemic, of which more than 90% were related to Hubei, and around 800 enquiries. The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Wuhan (“WHETO”) and other Mainland Offices have been providing practicable assistance and support having regard to the actual circumstances.

16. Some Hong Kong people in Hubei, especially those with chronic illnesses, require medications provided in Hong Kong. Arrangements have been made by the HKSAR Government to deliver medications to Hong Kong residents in Hubei who are in need. As at 5 April, arrangements were made to deliver medications to about 260 Hong Kong residents in Hubei. The Department of Health has also set up a health hotline to provide medical information to Hong Kong residents in Hubei. In case Hong Kong residents in Hubei are in need of daily necessities or supplies, WHETO would contact the small districts where they live and the local government for assistance. As arranged by WHETO, the International Social Service Hong Kong Branch and Social Workers Across Borders (Hong Kong, China) Hubei Representative Office have set up hotlines and Wechat accounts to provide support services. The International Social Service Hong Kong Branch has also donated powdered milk to families in need.

17. In addition, given the compulsory quarantine measures in Hong Kong, some Hong Kong residents in Guangdong and Fujian are unable to go to Hong Kong to attend follow-up medical consultations or collect medications and then return to the Mainland on the same day as they had done previously. The HKSAR Government introduced a special scheme for delivering prescription medications to Hong Kong residents who are currently residing in Guangdong and Fujian. As of 5 April, arrangements haven been made to deliver medications to more than 4 200 Hong Kong residents in need.

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

18. In addition, the HKSAR Government proactively takes forward the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development. After its two meetings in March and November 2019, the Leading Group for the Development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, chaired by Mr Han Zheng, Vice Premier of the State Council, and with members including Chief Executives of Hong Kong and Macao

SAR, promulgated 24 policy measures to provide greater convenience for Hong Kong people to develop, work and reside in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area and promote the convenient flow of people and goods within the Area. The HKSAR Government is following up with the relevant ministries/ departments on the early implementation of these 24 policy measures.

19. We have also stepped up efforts in stakeholder engagement with a view to gauging the views of various sectors on the effective implementation of the Outline Development Plan for Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (“Outline Development Plan”). Furthermore, we have also been promoting the development of the Greater Bay Area to local community and overseas stakeholders through dedicated website and social media, radio and television broadcast, as well as organising exhibitions and symposiums.

20. In 2020-21, CMAB will continue to take forward the development of the Greater Bay Area. Through publicity activities, we will enhance public awareness on the Greater Bay Area development and the Outline Development Plan and encourage the community to seize the opportunities brought about by the development.

Facilitation Measures for Hong Kong people in the Mainland

21. To further facilitate Hong Kong and Macao residents to use the Home Visit Permit for receiving public services and handling personal matters on the Mainland, the National Immigration Administration has set up a service platform for Exit-Entry Certificate Identification to provide facilitation on the use of the Home Visit Permit in the areas of transport, finance, communications, education, healthcare, taxation and accommodation, etc. In January 2020, the National Immigration Administration announced that a total of 35 facilitation measures had basically been implemented.

22. In the coming year, the Mainland Offices will continue to disseminate information in relation to the facilitation measures.

Development of Hong Kong-Taiwan Relations

23. 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 continue

to promote Hong Kong's strengths and enhance exchanges between the two places.

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
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