

**WOMEN' S COMMISSION**  
**Participation of Women in Advisory and Statutory Bodies**

**INTRODUCTION**

This paper:-

- (a) presents for Members' information the present position of women's participation in advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs);
- (b) informs Members measures that have been adopted to promote women's participation; and
- (c) invites Members' views on how to further enhance efforts in encouraging women's participation in ASBs.

**BACKGROUND**

2. The network of ASBs is a distinctive feature of the consultative system of the Government. It seeks to obtain, through consultation with interested groups and individuals in the community, the best possible advice based on which policy decisions could be made and statutory functions performed.

3. At present, there are over 370 major ASBs advising the Government on a broad spectrum of issues ranging from livelihood matters to highly technical and specialized subjects. In addition, there are district-level committees which are mainly concerned with local affairs. If these district committees and the sub-committees of ASBs are counted, the total number of ASBs is around 600.

4. The Government's policy is to ensure that the best available persons capable of meeting the specific requirements of the concerned bodies are appointed to ASBs. In general, members of ASBs are appointed on a personal basis. The suitability of prospective candidates is normally assessed having regard to their personal abilities, expertise, experience, integrity and commitment to public service, regardless of gender. This policy is consistent with the requirements of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of

Discrimination Against Women and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which have been applied to Hong Kong<sup>1</sup>. It is also in line with the relevant provisions in the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 480)<sup>2</sup>.

## **PRESENT POSITION ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ADVISORY AND STATUTORY BODIES**

5. Currently there are some 5,550 individuals from various walks of life serving on those around 600 ASBs. Among them, about 1,060 (i.e. over 19%) are women. In recent years, women's participation on ASBs has been gradually enhanced, from about 15% of the total number of non-official members in 1995 to over 19% in 2000. In the past decade, the percentage of women members on ASBs has doubled.

## **MEASURES ADOPTED TO PROMOTE PARTICIPATION IN ADVISORY AND STATUTORY BODIES**

6. As mentioned in paragraph 4, gender is not a factor for consideration in appointing members to ASBs. Having said that, in view of the phenomenon that men are playing a relatively more active role in public affairs, the Government has been promoting and encouraging women's participation in ASBs. To ensure that both sexes enjoy equal opportunities to participate in ASBs, bureaux and departments are regularly reminded that both men and women candidates should be duly considered so long as they possess the necessary expertise, experience and commitment to public service.

7. We have also stepped up efforts to increase women's awareness of and interest in service on ASBs. In the past two years, we have approached more than 100 women associations, both at the territory-wide and district levels, to obtain their membership lists so that we could write to their members to invite them to indicate their interest in serving on ASBs and to provide us with their personal data for inclusion in our database for consideration of appointment to ASBs. As a result of this exercise, about one third of the associations we have contacted responded positively to our approach. The database expansion exercise has allowed for more women candidates to be

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<sup>1</sup> According to Article 7(c) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country. According to Article 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the State Parties to the Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the Covenant.

<sup>2</sup> According to Section 3(e) of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, it is unlawful for a person to discriminate against another person in considering whether a person should be appointed as a member of a relevant body, where some or all of the members of that body are appointed.

considered for appointment to the ASBs.

8. Apart from the above measures, we have uploaded information relevant to participating in ASBs onto the Internet. Interested individuals may visit the website of the Home Affairs Bureau and indicate their willingness in participating in ASBs by downloading and filling in the curriculum vitae form and subsequently mailing their personal information to the Government. Such information will then be processed strictly in accordance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.

## **CONCLUSION**

9. The ASBs form an integral part of our public consultative system which the Administration relies on to obtain views from the community on various issues. To fulfil the objective of having the most suitable persons, irrespective of gender, to sit on the bodies according to their specific needs and functions, we strive continuously to expand our pool of candidates, based on voluntary participation of interested members of the public, to provide useful reference for the appointment and renewal of membership of these bodies.

10. We are aware that men, as compared with women, are currently filling the majority of the seats in ASBs. Due to various historical, social and cultural reasons, women may not have adequate time and interest in serving on ASBs. We will continue with our efforts to promote greater participation by women in ASBs, bearing in mind the objectives of the ASB system.

## **ADVICE SOUGHT**

11. Members are invited to:-

- (a) note the present position of and measures adopted to promote women's participation in ASBs; and
- (b) give views on how to further enhance efforts in encouraging women's participation in ASBs.

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Home Affairs Bureau  
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