

ExCo endorses reorganisation of government structure for sixth-term Government

The Executive Council (ExCo) today (May 17) considered and endorsed a package of proposals to reorganise the structure of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government to take effect from July 1, upon the request of the sixth-term Chief Executive-elect (CE-elect).

The package comprises various proposals initiated by the current-term Chief Executive (CE) in her 2021 Policy Address announced last October, and presented in detail to the Legislative Council (LegCo) in January this year. These proposals, which have been accepted in full by the CE-elect, are:

- (1) to set up a new Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau to take over the culture, arts and sports portfolios from the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), as well as the film, creative industries and tourism portfolios from the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau;
- (2) to split the Transport and Housing Bureau into two policy bureaux, namely the Transport and Logistics Bureau and the Housing Bureau;
- (3) to retitle the Innovation and Technology Bureau as the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau;
- (4) to reorganise the HAB into the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau;
- (5) to expand and retitle the Environment Bureau as the Environment and Ecology Bureau to take over from the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) the policies on environmental hygiene, food safety, agriculture and fisheries, veterinary public health, etc;
- (6) to revamp the FHB as the Health Bureau; and
- (7) to implement a number of policy transfers between bureaux and offices to rationalise and consolidate policy responsibilities, including the transfer of policy areas which are closely related, including manpower development, retirement protection and poverty alleviation, under a single policy bureau, namely the Labour and Welfare Bureau.

The ExCo-endorsed package has also included additional proposals sought by the CE-elect with a view to strengthening the government structure at the top level. They are:

1. the creation of three new positions of Politically Appointed Officials at the rank of Deputy Secretary of Department as provided for under Article 48(5) of the Basic Law, namely a Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, a Deputy Financial Secretary and a Deputy Secretary for Justice; and

2. strengthening the existing offices of the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS), the Financial Secretary (FS), and the Secretary for Justice (SJ) by adding to each office one directorate officer, and creating a Political Assistant post to support the SJ.

Under the reorganisation proposal, the number of policy bureaux will increase from 13 to 15. Nine policy bureaux will be put under the supervision of the CS, while the FS will oversee six policy bureaux. The proposed organisation chart for the sixth-term Government is at Annex 1, while detailed justifications for the proposals could be found in the LegCo Brief at Annex 2 issued today.

"As the incumbent CE has said in her meeting with the CE-elect on May 9, the current-term Government will render full assistance to the Office of the CE-elect with a view to securing all necessary approvals as soon as possible. We will submit the reorganisation proposals to the LegCo later today. Together with representatives of the Office of the CE-elect, relevant officials will attend the first meeting of the newly formed LegCo Subcommittee on this subject to be held on May 20 to answer Members' questions," a Government spokesman said.

"The Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs will shortly give notice to move a resolution in the LegCo in June to provide for the transfer of functions exercisable by a public officer under relevant ordinances to another public officer in order to implement the new government structure with effect from July 1 this year.

"We will also submit proposals in June to the Establishment Subcommittee and the Finance Committee for approval of the staffing and financial implications arising from the reorganisation exercise," he added.

The package will entail an increase of 13 Politically Appointed Officials and 57 civil service posts at a total salary cost of about \$95 million per year.