

LCQ11: Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Lo Wai-kiok and a written reply by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, in the Legislative Council today (May 5):

Question:

The Chief Executive announced in the 2017 Policy Address that the Central Policy Unit (CPU) would be revamped as a new office. The Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office (PICO) so established by the Government commenced operation on April 1, 2018. On the other hand, there are comments that the principal function of CPU was to conduct surveys and analyses on public sentiment and opinion for the reference of the senior government management in policy formulation; and the disconnect with public sentiment and opinion of certain decisions made by the Government in recent years in dealing with the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments and the epidemic may be related to the CPU being revamped. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the work of PICO includes assisting the senior government management in gauging public sentiment and opinion; if so, of the major accomplishments of PICO's work in this regard since its establishment; if not, the Government's strategies in place to better address public sentiment and opinion in the decision making process, so as to enhance the standard of its governance; and

(2) whether it has formulated key performance indicators for the work of PICO; if so, whether PICO's performance has met the targets; if the targets have not been met, of the details, and the improvement measures in place?

Reply:

President,

(1) In order for the Government to take up new roles and adopt a new governance style as proposed by the Chief Executive (CE) in her first Policy Address in October 2017, the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office (PICO) has, since its establishment in April 2018, focused on enhancing policy co-ordination of cross-bureaux issues and providing "first-stop and one-stop" project co-ordination services as one of its priority work areas. PICO is also responsible for co-ordinating the CE's annual Policy Address, and providing secretariat service and research support to the CE's Council of Advisers on Innovation and Strategic Development for the latter to discuss and map out Hong Kong's future development and strategies for driving innovation. In addition, PICO conducts exchanges with research institutions and think tanks on different public policies and issues, and promotes evidence-based public policy research through the Public Policy Research

(PPR) Funding Scheme and the Strategic Public Policy Research (SPPR) Funding Scheme.

Strengthening governance is a complex task. While it is the duty of the Government to listen and respond to public views, a responsible government should also balance public views with policy and other considerations, and in light of the actual circumstances, adopt various means and measures to achieve policy outcomes which are in the best interests of the community. As remarked by the CE, chaos had plagued Hong Kong over the past two years, making it difficult for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government to implement effective policies. The CE considered that the fundamental reason lay in the failure of the community as a whole in fully and faithfully implementing "One Country, Two Systems". Nor had timely action been taken to restore order from chaos, safeguard national security and implement the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong". The community has inadequate understanding of "One Country, Two Systems" and some people's awareness of the "One Country" principle has to be raised. Besides, ill-intentioned people deliberately misled the public about the relationship between the Central Government and the HKSAR, subjecting Hong Kong to unprecedented severe challenges over the past two years. To enable Hong Kong to have a real recovery, it is necessary to improve the institutions for implementation of "One Country, Two Systems". The two major decisions made by the Central Authorities, i.e. the enactment and implementation of the national security law in Hong Kong in June last year and the approval of the amended Annex I and Annex II to the Basic Law to improve the electoral system of the HKSAR in March this year, have not only restored stability in society and put the implementation of "One Country, Two Systems" back on the right track, but also provided a favourable environment for the HKSAR Government to enhance administration and efficacy of governance and better perform the duties of policy formulation and explanation.

(2) Since its establishment, PICO has accomplished a number of tasks according to the set objectives. These include reviewing existing legislation to help bureaux remove red tape, and conducting policy research on cross-bureaux issues to formulate solutions or legislative amendment proposals. In the past three years, PICO has also provided "first-stop and one-stop" consultation and co-ordination services for 24 projects. In addition, PICO has co-ordinated the CE's annual Policy Address and approved about 30 research projects under the PPR Funding Scheme and the SPPR Funding Scheme each year. Apart from the above-mentioned work, PICO has also assisted in implementing specific major or innovative projects as directed by the CE, such as the Employment Support Scheme under the second round of the Anti-epidemic Fund in 2020.

PICO will continue to carry out the above work and provide policy research and co-ordination support for cross-bureaux issues selected by the CE and senior echelon of the Government.