Notes of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Eastern District Council

The seventeenth meeting of the Eastern District Council was held on 5 February 2015 and the major items discussed are summarised in the ensuing paragraphs.

I. Meeting between the Commissioner for Transport and Eastern District Council Members

2. The views expressed by the Councillors are summarised as follows:

(a) A Councillor said that if the Government increased the tolls for the Cross-Harbour Tunnel while reducing those for the Eastern Harbour Crossing with a view to improving the traffic congestion at the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, serious traffic congestion in Sai Wan Ho would result from the traffic on the Eastern Island Corridor westbound.

(b) A number of Councillors said that there were weaknesses in the bus services at the Mid-levels, such as limited routes, serious problems of lost trips, etc., and hoped that the Transport Department (TD) could better address the demand for bus or minibus services from the residents at the Mid-levels.

(c) A number of Councillors said that the problem of illegal parking by large vehicles at the roadside in the district had been worsening and hoped that the TD could assist in improving it. A Councillor said that there were inadequate parking spaces for large vehicles in Eastern District and hoped that the TD could provide more parking spaces in the following year.

(d) A Councillor said that the roads near the Victoria Park would be overloaded whenever major events were held in the park and the situation had not been improved for years, she hoped that the TD would assist in exploring improvement measures. She also hoped that the TD would install pedestrian traffic light countdown timers to facilitate the public to cross the roads.

(e) A Councillor said that bus services would be affected by traffic incidents, processions, etc. She hoped that the TD would make use of current technology to inform the public of the road traffic situation, including information about the scenes of incidents, as soon as possible so as to reduce passengers' waiting time and the number of complaints.

(f) A number of Councillors said that although the Council had strived to install a lift in Tai Koo MTR Station for many years, no positive results were achieved. They hoped that the TD would assist in following up the matter with the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL).

(g) A Councillor hoped that penalties could be incorporated into bus franchise agreements in order to make bus companies respond to public requests more positively.

(h) A Councillor asked whether the provisions in the tender agreements for green minibuses required operators to hire sufficient drivers and provide on-time services, and whether penalties had been incorporated into the agreements.

(i) A number of Councillors agreed with the policy of developing railways as the backbone of the transportation system, but said that bus services should not be reduced. A Councillor suggested that long-haul express bus routes should be operated at locations where the railways had reached their full capacity. A Councillor said that profits of the operator and district population should not be the only considerations for providing railway extensions, and that extensions should be provided to attract potential residents.

(j) A number of Councillors hoped that the TD would adjust the fares of cross-harbour buses to the levels of those of Hong Kong Island routes.

(k) A number of Councillors said that the residents in Siu Sai Wan had a great hope for MTR service in their area. A Councillor hoped that feeder bus service between Siu Sai Wan and the MTR station could be increased during peak hours. A Councillor said that the Railway Development Strategy announced by the Government last year did not reflect the demand for a railway extension by Siu Sai Wan, he would

submit detailed information to the TD to reflect the demand by the residents in the area.

(l) A number of Councillors said that the extension of the MTR Island Line would come into operation soon and asked the TD to deploy bus resources to Eastern District.

(m) A Councillor hoped that the number of minibuses and their seats could be increased to offer convenience to the public and relieve traffic congestion.

(n) A Councillor said that additional fare was charged for bus-bus interchange, but the fare was not equal to the difference between the fares of the two routes. He hoped that the TD would assist in implementing free interchange as soon as possible; for example, only the fare of the longer route was charged.

(o) A number of Councillors said that the noise pollution caused by the Chai Wan MTR Station had seriously affected the daily life of nearby residents for many years and the problem had not been improved. They hoped that the TD would urge the MTRCL to improve the problem by retrofitting noise barriers to reduce nuisances, etc.

(p) According to a number of Councillors, it was learnt recently that a warehouse in Chai Wan would be converted into a columbarium by an organisation. They were of the view that the traffic of Chai Wan would be further affected and hoped that the TD would provide solutions as soon as possible.

(q) A number of Councillors said that bus fares would be adjusted upwards when there was a rise in oil price, but would not be adjusted downwards when there was a drop in the price, they hoped that the TD would follow up the matter with bus companies.

II. Discussion on the 2015 Policy Address

3. The views expressed by the Councillors are summarised as follows:

(a) A Councillor considered that the sale of public rental housing (PRH) flats at prices lower than those of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) flats could not meet the needs of people ineligible for purchasing HOS flats or unable to buy other flats.

(b) A Councillor stated the Government's intention of implementing the HOS. He agreed that the Government should assist the public in purchasing flats by selling PRH flats, but said that the public should return their flats to the Government instead of reselling them for profits if their quality of living is improved in the future.

(c) A Councillor said that the priority projects under the Universal Accessibility Programme of Eastern District had been confirmed, but the works would only be completed in 3 or 4 years. She hoped that the works progress could be speeded up.

(d) According to a Councillor, the Government said that it would devote itself to maintaining the core values as integrity. He cited several relevant incidents which had happened earlier to reflect that the Government had not put forward specific measures to regain the confidence of the public and international investors in Hong Kong's determation to maintain integrity, nor had it mentioned how to amend anti-corruption ordinances to monitor the acts of the Chief Executive and senior officials.

(e) A Councillor considered that the Government had to attach importance to labour rights and livelihood issues and listen to the views of the grassroots. He objected to labour importation in order to ensure the priority of local workers in employment, and hoped that the Government would offer more employment support to women and step up the promotion of vocational education to draw up a diversified career blueprint for the youth.

(f) A Councillor said that the elderly health care subsidy scheme only provided fundamental support and hoped that the Government would attach importance to the increasing needs of specialist medical services. He also hoped that the Youth Development Fund would be

implemented in the form of matching funds to speed up the pace of youth development so as to benefit more young people.

III. Consultation Document on Method for Selecting the Chief Executive by Universal Suffrage

Urging different sectors of the community to reach a consensus about the method for selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage in 2017 in accordance with the Basic Law and the relevant decisions of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress as soon as possible
(EDC Paper No. 1/15)

4. The views expressed by the Councillors are summarised as follows:

(a) A Councillor supported selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage in accordance with the Basic Law and the decision approved by the NPCSC (Standing Committee of the National People's Congress) on 31 August 2014 (hereinafter referred to as the "831 Decision"). He said that people opposing the "831 Decision" (hereinafter referred to as opponents) had expressed their views by different methods, but the "831 Decision" remained unchanged. He hoped that they could listen to public views and enable universal suffrage for the Chief Executive election to be implemented as soon as possible.

(b) A Councillor considered that democracy should be developed step by step and hoped that the community could reach a consensus to implement universal suffrage for the Chief Executive election as soon as possible.

(c) A number of Councillors said that the opportunity for selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage had not been provided over the past hundred odd years, and supported the current proposal on universal suffrage though it might not be perfect. They said that it should be implemented first and could be improved in the future; otherwise, the public would suffer a great loss.

(d) A Councillor hoped that the Government could step up its promotion of

the details of the current proposal and help the public know more about the proposal so as to gain public support.

(e) According to a Councillor, the "831 Decision" required that the candidates for the Chief Executive election should be selected by the nominating committee; as a result, many people would be excluded and the candidates selected for the public to vote by "one person, one vote" might not be the ones they wanted to choose.

(f) A Councillor said that according to the current proposal, the candidates would be selected by a small group of people for the public to vote, the proposal was a step backwards in democratic development.

(g) A Councillor said that according to a recent public opinion poll, a majority of people opposed the "831 Decision", he considered that the Government should respond to the results in a sensible and pragmatic way as mentioned in the consultation document. He also said that the Basic Law only conferred on the NPCSC the power of "approving" the proposal on universal suffrage rather than the power of "decision", therefore, he considered the "831 Decision" invalid.

(h) A Councillor said that the "831 Decision" was the decision of the highest legislative body of the country, it was unreasonable for individuals to request for amendment. He said that the community had to choose between "implementation of universal suffrage for the Chief Executive election" and "a stalemate in democratic development", and considered that though the former might not be perfect, it would enable us to take a step forward in democratic development. He considered that the community should focus on economic development and livelihood issues.

(i) A Councillor supported selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage in accordance with the Basic Law and "831 Decision", and said that 75% of the members of the public were willing to accept the proposal with the hope of implementing universal suffrage for the Chief Executive election as soon as possible. He agreed that democracy could not be achieved in one step and said that if the proposal was vetoed, the public would miss the chance.

(j) 4 Councillors made the following declarations respectively:

Declarations 1 and 2: "I hereby declare that I strongly oppose the Paper No. 1/15 'Urging different sectors of the community to reach a consensus about the method for selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage in 2017 in accordance with the Basic Law and the relevant decisions of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress as soon as possible' discussed at the meeting of the Eastern District Council today (5 February).

Now, the proposal on constitutional development is confined by the unreasonable framework imposed by the decision made by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on 31 August 2014 ('831 Decision'), and the power to nominate candidates for the Chief Executive election is still vested in a small group of people without sufficient participation from the public. The '831 Decision' has led to an unprecedented confrontational campaign in Hong Kong which has proved the anger and disappointment of the members of the public who truly support democracy.

Under the circumstances, the Council breaks its promise by distorting public opinions and supporting the framework imposed by the NPCSC on behalf of the public. In my opinion, the Government has to restart the constitutional development process and the NPC has to revoke the '831 Decision' in order to regain the confidence of the public and make them reach a consensus; otherwise,

everything is a waste of efforts no proposal on constitutional development can demonstrate real progress in democracy.

I declare my opposition to the Discussion Paper No. 1/15 and the motion stated therein again as proof."

Declaration 3: "I am greatly disappointed at the framework for universal suffrage for the selection of the Chief Executive in 2017 set out by the NPC on 31 August because the unjust framework represents a step backwards in democracy and the election by universal suffrage will be a fake one as voters can only vote on the candidates selected by the nominating committee by 'one person, one vote'. If the NPC does not revoke the 831 framework, it is useless to discuss the second round of consultation on constitutional development."

Declaration 4: "If the selection of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage in 2017 is implemented in accordance with the 831 framework set out by the NPC, the democratic principles of 'one country, two systems', 'Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong' and a high degree of autonomy prescribed in the Basic Law will be violated seriously because

1. 1200 members of the nominating committee only represent 0.03% of the eligible voters in Hong Kong (0.03% = 1200/3 500 000) and the principle of 'broadly representative' is not fulfilled.

2. The nomination threshold that candidates for the Chief Executive election must

obtain endorsement of more than half of all the members of the nominating committee turns the nomination stage into a pre-selection stage, the election will obviously be conducted under control and guidance and the principle of maintaining a fair and open democratic election will be violated.

3. The number of candidates is set at two to three and the candidates are chosen by a small group of people, so balanced participation cannot be achieved.

The following strong requests are made:

(a) More voters should be allowed to participate at the nomination stage before the election of the Chief Executive by 'one person, one vote' in 2017, so that candidates can have sufficient public support.

(b) The representativeness of the nominating committee should be enhanced and the disproportionate representativeness of some subsectors in the Election Committee should be improved.

(c) Corporate votes, director votes and organisation votes should be replaced by individual votes in the election of the members of the nominating committee."

5. Having expressed their views, the Councillors dealt with the motion set out in the paper. After extensive discussion and voting by open ballot, the Eastern

District Council passed the following motion with 27 votes in favour, 5 against and zero abstention:

"The Eastern District Council fully supports the second round of consultation on constitutional development conducted by the Government of the HKSAR, opposes a stalemate in the method for selecting the Chief Executive and urges different sectors of the community to reach a consensus about the method for selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage in 2017 in accordance with the Basic Law and the relevant decisions of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress as soon as possible to facilitate democratic development in Hong Kong."

Eastern District Council Secretariat
April 2015