

**Notes of Discussion of the
Second Sexual Minorities Forum
held on 24 January 2005 at 2:35 p.m.
in the Conference Room, 30/F, Southorn Centre, Wanchai**

Present

Home Affairs Bureau (HAB)

Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (Chairman)	Mr Stephen FISHER
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs	Mrs Hedy CHU
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs	Miss Joanna CHOI
Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs	Miss Vivian CHAN
Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs	Miss Louisa YAN
Senior Statistician, HAB	Miss Julia HUI
Senior Executive Officer, HAB (Secretary)	Ms Winnie CHEUNG

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Amnesty International Hong Kong Section	Ms Liz WHITELAM
Blessed Minority Christian Fellowship	Rev. SUN Suk-man
Chi Heng Foundation	Mr TO Chung
Chi Heng Foundation/The Satsanga	Mr Albert LUK
Civil Rights for Sexual Diversities	Mr Roddy SHAW Kwok-wah
Equal Opportunities Commission	Mr Ferrick CHU
Hong Kong Christian Institute	Mr FAN Lap-hin
Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor	Ms Baig Raees BEGUM
Hong Kong Ten Percent Club	Mr CHO Man-kit
Human Rights Council of Hong Kong	Professor LEE Ngok, JP
Rainbow Action	Ms YEUNG Wai-wai
Rainbow Fellowship	Mr Kenneth CHEUNG Kam-hung
The Transgender Equality and Acceptance Movement	Ms Robin BRADBEER
Transgender Asia	Ms Robyn EMMERTON
Women Coalition of Hong Kong	Dr Sam WINTER Ms Connie CHAN

Welcoming remarks

1. The Chairman welcomed all participants, in particular the representatives from Blessed Minority Christian Fellowship and Transgender Asia who attended the Forum for the first time.

Confirmation of notes of last meeting

2. The notes of the last meeting were confirmed without amendments.

Survey on public attitudes towards homosexuals

(SMF Paper No. 1/2005)

3. Regarding the upcoming survey on public attitudes towards homosexuals, a member reiterated his doubts about assessing public acceptance on sexual behaviour of homosexual/bisexual persons in the survey given that it had little relevance on the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation on the ground of sexual orientation. He also urged the Government to conduct a qualitative research to find out the situation on the discrimination against sexual minorities.

4. The Chairman explained that questions explicitly on a particular sexual behaviour would not be included in the questionnaire. Nevertheless, the member's concern would be noted and brought to the attention of the independent advisory group when deciding on the design of the questionnaire.

5. Another member opined that the moral basis for anti-discrimination legislation should rest on the existence of discrimination rather than public acceptance of those people being discriminated against. Legislation itself would bring about educational impact on the public in that more people would be aware of the issue.

6. With respect to para. 5 of the paper, a member welcomed the Government's proposal to conduct a separate survey on transgenders and suggested that once the survey on public attitudes towards homosexuals was completed, the Government should start the survey on transgenders.

7. The Chairman indicated that the draft questionnaire would be passed to both the Forum and the religious/education/family values groups for comments. However, the independent advisory group would have the final say on the overall design of the questionnaire.

Equal Opportunities (Sexual Orientation) Funding Scheme
(Paper No. SMF 2/2005)

8. With respect to the proposal to set annual themes for the Equal Opportunities (Sexual Orientation) Funding Scheme, members expressed the following views and suggestions:

- (a) the suggested annual themes were mostly about what people should or should not do. The Forum might consider activities with softer approach such as those about the culture of homosexuals and transgenders;
- (b) projects under the funding scheme were piecemeal and small-scale and hence not effective in raising the general public's awareness on sexual minorities;
- (c) the suggested theme about the media's distortion of sexual minorities (the sixth bullet in Annex B of the Paper) could be dropped as there was little media coverage on sexual minorities;
- (d) a new theme on good practices of employers would help publicize the needs of sexual minorities in employment-related aspects such as the benefits of their long-term partners;
- (e) discriminations against homosexuals in schools and uniformed groups should be brought into focus; and

- (f) activities for teachers and social workers on how to deal with young homosexuals might be included.
9. In response, the Chairman made the following remarks:
- (a) cultural and social events might not be effective in raising public awareness on sexual minorities as these would only attract people who were already receptive to the message to be promoted by the Government. The activities of the Funding Scheme should aim at reaching to the wider community; and
 - (b) as one of the purposes of the Funding Scheme was to provide funds to non-governmental organizations (NGOs)/groups to promote equal opportunities for people of different sexual orientations, it was not appropriate to allocate all the available fund of \$0.5 million to a single NGO/group to organize a large-scale campaign.

Setting up of a “Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Unit”
(Paper No. SMF 3/2005)

10. On the proposal to set up a Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Unit (GISOU) in HAB, a member opined that many sexual minorities were hesitant to lodge formal complaints about discriminatory conduct against them. It was likely that the number of complaints from sexual minorities would turn out to be fewer than those from the ethnic minorities.

11. In reply to members’ questions, the Chairman said that 150 cases, including verbal complaints, were handled by the Race Relations Unit in 2002/2003. On the funding of the Unit, an annual provision of about \$1.5 million could be made available in the foreseeable future for operating the GISOU.

Any other business

(a) *Paper on Sexual Orientation and Human Rights in Hong Kong*

12. In response to Miss Begum's suggestion of presenting a paper on Sexual Orientation and Human Rights in Hong Kong which was produced by the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, the Chairman agreed to include the paper in the agenda of the next meeting.

(b) *Code of Practice Against Discrimination in Employment on the Ground of Sexual Orientation*

13. Regarding the suggestion to make use of the network of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) to distribute the Code of Practice Against Discrimination in Employment on the Ground of Sexual Orientation compiled by HAB, Mr Chu of the EOC said that HAB and EOC could work out further means of publicizing the Code of Practice, e.g. by adding a hyperlink in the website of EOC.

(c) *Meetings with the religious/education/family values groups*

14. The Chairman said that HAB had been holding separate meetings with the religious/education/family values groups on sexual orientation issues. Groups from either side could attend the meetings of the other as observers.

Date of next meeting

15. There being no other business, the discussion ended at 4:30 p.m. Members would be notified of the date of the next Forum in due course.

Home Affairs Bureau
May 2005