

RESTRICTED

(cleared for publication)

**Minutes of the Ninety-eighth Meeting of
The Equal Opportunities Commission
held on 13 September 2012 (Thursday) at 2:30 p.m. in the
Equal Opportunities Commission's Conference/Training Room**

Present

Mr. LAM Woon-kwong, G.B.S., J.P.	Chairperson
Ms CHAN Ka-mun, Carmen, J.P.	
Ms CHAN Man-ki, Maggie	
Ms CHOI Hing-shi, M.H.	
Dr. KOONG May-kay, Maggie	
Mr. LUI Tim-leung, Tim, B.B.S., J.P.	
Mr. Amirali Bakirali NASIR, J.P.	
Ms NG Wing-mui, Winnie	
Mr. Zaman Minhas QAMAR	
Dr. TSANG Kit-man, Sandra	
The Hon TSE Wai-chun, Paul	
Dr. TSE Wing-ling, John, M.H.	
Ms WONG Ka-ling, Garling	
Mr. YIP Siu-hong, Nelson, M.H.	
Mr. Michael CHAN Yick-man	Secretary Director, Planning & Administration [DPA]

Absent with apologies

Ms CHIU Lai-kuen, Susanna
Mr. LEE Luen-fai

In attendance

Mr. Joseph LI Siu-kwai	Director, Operations [D(Ops)]
Mr. Herman POON Lik-hang	Chief Legal Counsel [CLC]
Mr. Kelvin MAK Kwong-yuen	Senior Policy and Research Officer [SPRO2]
Ms Shana WONG Shan-nar	Head, Corporate Communications & Training [HCCT]
Miss Gloria YU Wai-ling	Senior Equal Opportunities Officer, Administration & Personnel [SAP]

I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson (C/EOC) welcomed all Commission Members (Members) to the 98th Meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Ms CHIU Lai-kuen, Susanna and Mr. LEE Luen-fai, due to clash of meeting schedules/other business engagements/out of town.

2. C/EOC said that a press briefing would be held after the meeting in accordance with the usual practice.

II. Confirmation of Minutes (Agenda Item No. 1)

3. The Minutes of the 95th Meeting held on 14 June 2012 and issued to Members on 29 June 2012, the 96th (Special) Meeting held on 10 July 2012 and issued to Members on 9 August 2012 and the 97th (Special) Meeting held on 17 August 2012 and issued to Members on 24 August 2012 were confirmed without amendment.

III. Matters Arising (Agenda Item No. 2)

4. There were no matters arising from previous meetings that required Members' attention in this meeting.

IV. New Agenda Items

Progress Report on the Follow-up Actions on the Formal Investigation on Accessibility

(EOC Paper No. 15/2012; Agenda Item No. 3)

5. D(Ops) briefed Members on the latest progress on the follow-up actions on the Formal Investigation on Accessibility as contained in EOC Paper No. 15/2012.

6. Members noted that by 30 June 2012, the Government had completed 99.3% of the Class A improvement items (3041 in total; 21 items reported in the last meeting were re-classified under Class B). The remaining items would also be completed shortly. As for Class B items (423 in total, including 21 items reported under Class A now re-classified under Class B), 232 premises/facilities (i.e. 55%) had passed the site survey stage. All Class B projects were expected to be completed by end of June 2016.

7. Separately, Members noted that more information had been available since the last reporting on the LINK's barrier-free facilities improvements under its Assets Enhancement Initiatives. The Assets Enhancement Initiatives was a five-year program commencing from 2011/12 to improve the barrier-free facilities in 160 sites. Priority was given to improve tactile guide paths, accessible service counters, accessible toilets, visual fire alarm system, accessible parking space, Braille layout maps and signage, followed by features involving structural or design changes, such as accessible lifts, automatic doors, ramps, etc. Enhancement works had commenced in 73 sites with works completed in 25 sites by the end of August 2012. It was noted that the LINK aimed to complete its improvement initiatives in 90% of its properties by the end of 2014. It would also upload its work progress on its website on a quarterly basis.

8. Members noted that the EOC Access Advisory Group comprising representatives from 11 rehabilitation / disability groups and set up in March 2011 to provide their views on access issues had earlier visited Wo Che Plaza which was under the LINK's management to understand the barrier-free improvements there. Members also noted that the LINK, in collaboration with the University of Hong Kong, was developing an 'electronic guide path' system using mobile technology for users.

(Dr. John TSE joined the meeting at this juncture.)

9. C/EOC added that on 21 August 2012, the Chief Executive of the HKSAR had announced the Government's special scheme to install some 230 lifts in various public areas to supplement the present walkways, which would

help PWDs and the elderly to get around town easier. The EOC had issued a press statement supporting this initiative which would benefit a wide spectrum of people. More importantly, it was glad to note that the Government had moved away from the mindset of doing the minimum and recognized the importance of universal access. It was expected that \$100 million would be provided for this scheme in the coming year, rising to over \$1 billion annually in the few years following. With the concerted efforts of all, C/EOC hoped to see more Government-led initiatives to enhance accessibility in Hong Kong's built environment and local awareness about the impact and importance of accessible architecture raised.

(Mr. Nelson YIP and Mr. A B NASIR joined the meeting at this juncture.)

10. Ms Garling WONG said that she had joined the visit to Wo Che Plaza and found that generally speaking, the improvements in the barrier-free facilities there only met the minimum standards of the relevant laws and regulations. Mr. Nelson YIP added that a brief appraisal conducted recently by an NGO on the same premises also identified areas where improvements were called for. Ms Garling WONG and Mr. Nelson YIP hoped to see more initiatives facilitating universal access. Dr. John TSE expressed that in moving forward, a long-term plan on how to achieve universal access should be mapped out by the EOC at the strategic level instead of spending time monitoring the detailed rectifications required item by item contained in the Formal Investigation Report. Mr. Nelson YIP said that one of the most effective ways to move forward was to urge for a regular review of the Barrier Free Access Design Manual issued by the Buildings Department. Dr. Sandra TSANG suggested that the EOC could consolidate the experience accumulated in tackling various barrier-free access issues and share our experience and expertise with the public.

11. In response to questions raised by Mr. Z M QAMAR, C/EOC said that the Government's special scheme to install lifts would serve locations such as footbridges and steep slopes and where there was a major flow of pedestrians. As Hong Kong was a gradually ageing society, getting around steep slopes and footbridges had become challenges for the elderly and disabled persons and the

demand for barrier-free facilities such as lifts was growing. It was noted that the Government also welcomed public suggestions for installation of lifts at particular locations via its hotline on 1823.

(Ms Maggie CHAN joined the meeting at this juncture.)

12. Ms Garling WONG commented that apart from major installation works, some small changes could also bring about convenience in no small measure to PWDs, like signages and barrier-free webpage design. C/EOC agreed that barrier-free initiatives might not incur a lot of financial resources. The EOC would map out the way forward and the relevant strategies for the Board's consideration in the near future.

Progress Update on Organizing of the EOC Forum 2012

(EOC Paper No. 16/2012; Agenda Item No. 4)

13. DPA briefed Members on the latest progress on organizing of the EOC Forum 2012 as detailed in EOC Paper No. 16/2012.

(The Hon Paul TSE joined the meeting at this juncture.)

14. Members noted that as of today, there had been more than 80 participants from various stakeholder groups enrolled for the Forum. The expected total number of participants would be around 120. An estimated budget of around \$45,000 would be used on the Forum and the major breakdowns were listed in the said EOC Paper. A number of EOC publications would be distributed to participants at the Forum which included the presentation materials in both English and Chinese, the EOC's newly published EO Casebook, the EOC Factsheet 2011/12 and the EOC Annual Report 2011/12. Members were shown the draft presentation materials of which their comments were invited.

15. Ms Garling WONG suggested that all former EOC Board Members would be invited to attend the Forum as guest participants and this was agreed. The name of the Forum would be renamed as "EOC Forum 2012" instead of

“EOC Annual Forum” and whether such a Forum would be held next year or annually in the future would be reviewed after this Forum. On the presentation materials, it was suggested that more pictures/visuals but less words could be used. In addition, the major challenges faced the EOC should be included with a view to engaging stakeholders’ support in tackling the challenges and advancing EOC’s work. The message that equal opportunities is a concern for everyone should be conveyed in the Forum. The Secretariat would follow up on Members’ views and suggestions. A letter would also be issued to all Members for them to confirm their availability for the Forum.

16. Members noted EOC Paper No. 16/2012.

Six Monthly Review of EOC’s Work (January – June 2012)

(EOC Paper No. 17/2012; Agenda Item No. 5)

17. EOC Paper No. 17/2012 provided a statistical representation of the work of the Commission, as well as major work / project progress and court actions undertaken for the period 1 January to 30 June 2012.

18. Members noted EOC Paper No. 17/2012.

Reports of the Legal & Complaints Committee (LCC), Community Participation & Publicity Committee (CPPC), Policy and Research Committee (PARC) and Administration & Finance Committee (A&FC)

(EOC Paper No. 18/2012; Agenda Item No. 6)

19. Members considered EOC Paper No. 18/2012 which presented important matters raised and decisions made at the meetings of the 4 Committees established under the EOC.

20. Dr John TSE enquired the progress of the Review of Training Service of the EOC in particular on the “train-the-trainer” approach as mentioned in paragraph 11 of Appendix 2 to EOC Paper No. 18/2012, and on the promotion of the online training modules as mentioned in paragraph 12 of the same Appendix to the said paper. He opined that the “train-the-trainer” approach, if

adopted by the EOC, could help address demands on training services. He added that help from and partnership with local universities could be solicited in extending EOC's delivery of training services and to map out a structured accreditation system for EO trainers. On the online training modules, he hoped more promotion could be done to increase their usage.

(Ms Carmen CHAN joined the meeting at this juncture.)

21. In response to Dr TSE's comments, C/EOC said that the "train-the-trainer" approach had been discussed for some time but the idea of soliciting help from universities was a new direction worth consideration. HCCT supplemented that due to insufficient time in the last meeting, more in-depth discussion on this matter would continue in the coming meeting of the Community Participation and Publicity Committee (CPPC). For the online training modules, the usage rate had been high. For example, over four thousand university students had completed the online training module on Sexual Harassment since its launch. Moreover, it was viewed that online training modules could not replace but were complementary to classroom training. On whether to adopt the "train-the-trainer" approach, Ms Garling WONG added that the subject had previously been discussed in CPPC meetings several times, and she recalled that one of the reasons of not adopting the approach was that organizations requesting for EO training preferred the training offered by EOC staff over other non-EOC trainers. In the coming review on this subject, it was worth identifying if there would be categories of EO training that could suitably be conducted by non-EOC trainers.

22. On the subject of advocating for equal education opportunities for students with special educational needs, Dr. Maggie KOONG enquired if this would be discussed in the coming meeting with officials of the Education Bureau on 27 September 2012. Ms Carmen CHAN and Dr Sandra TSANG also echoed their concerns in this matter. In response, C/EOC said that this was an important issue warranting special attention. However, due to limited time available, this subject might not be discussed in the abovementioned meeting. Instead, more focused effort and attention on this subject would be necessary when the report on the Study on Equal Learning Opportunities for

Students with Disabilities under the Integrated Education System was to be released, and another meeting with the Education Bureau should be arranged.

23. In response to a question raised by Mr. A B NASIR related to the internal control on the use of licensed software, DPA said that the EOC Office had a system in place to ensure compliance and audit would be considered as and when necessary.

[Post-meeting note: All computers and software applications in the EOC Office were centrally controlled and installed by the IT Office, and only licensed software was purchased.]

24. Members noted EOC Paper No. 18/2012.

V. Any Other Business

EOC's Participation to the "Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities 8th Session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" and the "22nd Rehabilitation International World Congress"

25. For the record, C/EOC reported that approval had been given by the EOC Board for Mr. Nelson YIP and HPR to represent the EOC to attend the "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 8th Session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" on 17 and 18 September 2012 with an estimated budget of HK\$75,000. Separately, Ms Garling WONG and Miss Rachel SZETO, Senior Equal Opportunities Officer (Operations) would represent the EOC to attend the "22nd Rehabilitation International World Congress" from 30 October to 2 November 2012 and the estimated budget would be HK\$30,000.

Congratulations to The Hon Paul TSE for his success in the 2012 Legislative Council Election

26. On behalf of the Meeting, C/EOC congratulated The Hon Paul TSE for his success in the 2012 Legislative Council Election and hoped that he could

continue to bring EOC's voice to the Council.

27. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

VI. Date of Next Meeting

28. The next regular EOC meeting was scheduled for 20 December 2012 (Thursday) at 2:30 p.m.

Equal Opportunities Commission
October 2012