

EOC/PSR/02/19

2106-2123

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24 October 2002

Dr. E. K. YEOH
Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
19th Floor, Murray Building
Garden Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear

**Draft Outline of Second Report of HKSAR
under the Convention on the Elimination of
All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**

I refer to the consultation of the captioned document and welcome this opportunity for the Equal Opportunities Commission to comment on it.

We find the outline document published by the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) a useful starting point for discussion on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, we were disappointed to learn at the consultation session held on 12 October 2002 that the Government would not be holding any further consultation on CEDAW once the report is drafted.

We believe this is a serious flaw in the consultation process. In its present form, the outline is not a self-contained document and does not provide sufficient information to facilitate structured and in-depth responses to the report. Specifically, one of the most important aspects of the report is absent for consultation, that is, the evaluation of the progress with implementing CEDAW and proposals for improvements in the future. Instead, the outline only provides a list of items to be included in the report without giving any details or perspective on the issues underpinning these items.

We feel it is a matter of principle and good practice that the public is given ample opportunity to comment on the actual report. We therefore urge HWFB to conduct a second round consultation on the draft report prior to submission to central government. In its present format, we are unable to provide any further comments on the contents of the outline document.

As regards the concluding observations of the Committee on CEDAW, the outline document refers to the paragraph numbers of these observations but gives no details of the actual remarks. We feel that these observations should have been attached to the outline document for ease of reference but this was not the case for reasons unknown. We are aware that this paper is available on the Government website but this does not assist those who have limited or no access to computers, or those who simply do not prefer to use computers to receive information. The Government has a duty to disseminate information on CEDAW as widely as possible through various channels, including printed media. The Government should also consider the particular difficulties for certain groups of people to access information, such as women with disabilities, and to ensure that information is provided in formats easily accessible to them.

As regards the availability of the final report, we were informed at the recent consultation session that it would be made public after central government has incorporated it as part of its overall report. We hope the Government will inform the public as soon as that takes place and to disseminate the report widely in the community through a variety of channels.

For your information, we will be submitting an alternative report under CEDAW to the CEDAW Committee. A copy will be forwarded to HWFB once it is prepared.

Finally, we note in the outline document that the Government would be sending all responses to the present consultation in their original texts to the CEDAW Committee under a separate cover. We welcome this letter being sent along with other submissions.

If you have any queries, please feel free to contact Miss LAM Siu Wai, Senior Equal Opportunities Officer, at 2106 2202.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Wu
Chairperson