

**Minutes of the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Meeting of
The Equal Opportunities Commission
held on 15 December 2022 (Thursday) at 2:30 p.m. in the
Equal Opportunities Commission's Conference Room**

Present

Mr Ricky CHU Man-kin, IDS	Chairperson [C/EOC]
Ms Queenie CHAN Lai-kwan, MH	
Prof Cecilia CHAN Lai-wan, JP	
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP	(via telephone-conferencing)
Prof Andy CHIU Man-chung	(via telephone-conferencing)
Ms Rosanna CHOI Yi-tak	
Dr Theresa CUNANAN	
Mr Mohan DATWANI	(via telephone-conferencing)
Ms Maisy HO Chiu-ha, BBS	(via telephone-conferencing)
Dr Sigmund LEUNG Sai-man, BBS, JP	
Dr Henry SHIE Wai-hung	
Ms Anna THOMPSON	
Ms Linda TSANG Chi-man	
Dr Rizwan ULLAH, MH	(via telephone-conferencing)
Miss Rabi YIM Chor-pik	
Dr Ferrick CHU Chung-man	Secretary Executive Director (Operations) [ED/O]

Absent with apologies

Mr Simon LAM Ken-chung
Mr Gary WONG Chi-him, JP

In attendance

Mr Ivan LUK Chi-cheung	Executive Director (Enforcement) [ED/E]
Mr Oska LI Kam-hung	Director, Corporate Planning and Services [DCPS]
Mr Allan MAN Sui-lun	Chief Legal Counsel [CLC]
Ms Shana WONG Shan-nar	Head, Corporate Communications [HCC]
Ms Doris TSUI Ue-ting	Acting Head, Policy, Research and Training [Ag HPRT]

Ms Candy CHU Man-yan	Chief Equal Opportunities Officer (Complaint Services) [CA]
Miss Gloria YU Wai-ling	Senior Equal Opportunities Officer, Administration & Personnel [SAP]
Ms Hollis LING Yin-har	Equal Opportunities Officer, Administration & Personnel [EAP]

I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson (C/EOC) welcomed all attending Board Members (Members) to the 135th Meeting. C/EOC informed the Meeting that The Hon Vincent CHENG, Prof Andy CHIU, Mr Mohan DATWANI, Ms Maisy HO and Dr Rizwan ULLAH would join the meeting via telephone conference. Dr Theresa CUNANAN would join the meeting at a later time and apologies for absence were received from Mr Simon LAM who was out of town and Mr Gary WONG due to a clash of schedule.
2. C/EOC said that there were no special issues for informing the media, hence no press briefing would be held after the meeting.

II. Matters Arising (Agenda Item No. 2)

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

III. New Agenda Items

Chairperson's Quarterly Report
(EOC Paper No. 11/2022; Agenda Item No. 3)

4. C/EOC highlighted the important work done during the period from September to November 2022 as contained in EOC Paper No. 11/2022.

5. Members noted that the EOC had successfully pitched for a regular column from the news media HK01, succeeding the one at AM730. C/EOC said the number of visitors and views of the HK01 website and mobile applications had made it a very influential new media in Hong Kong, and op-ed articles published there had been able to reach more readers.

6. Members noted that the EOC had rolled out a first-ever Equal Opportunity Youth Ambassador Scheme (the Ambassador Scheme) which aimed at nurturing young diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) leaders through a host of experiential and mentoring activities. The Ambassador Scheme had successfully recruited 36 youth ambassadors out of 73 applications received from tertiary students. The activities for this first round of youth ambassadors would be held during the period from around January to July 2023, including a commendation ceremony cum sharing session as closing.

7. As regards the submission in October 2021 to the Government about the proposed legislative amendments to the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) and other recommendations, C/EOC envisaged that a broad consensus would be achieved on the proposed protections from sexual harassment between persons from different education establishments and between persons occupying premises in the same residential or composite buildings. Besides, the proposed legislative amendment involving employers' liabilities would need further consultation with employers. Members would be kept posted of the progress of the proposed legislative amendments to the SDO as well as to the Race Discrimination Ordinance as highlighted to Members at the last meeting.

8. C/EOC shared gladly with Members that the number of signatories of the Racial Diversity and Inclusion Charter for Employers (the Charter) had been

growing steadily and had exceeded 260 already. The Commission held a physical event for the Charter signatories on 25 November 2022 at the HKEX to mark the significant milestones in the Charter progress. As and when the situation of the COVID-19 epidemic alleviated, the Charter events, such as sharing sessions among employers, would be held primarily in physical form instead of online mode.

9. In response to a Member's suggestion, HCC said the purpose of the Ambassador Scheme was to enhance awareness and experience of the youth ambassadors through experiential learning activities, strengthen their connection and sense of belonging with the EOC with a view to encouraging them to promote equal opportunities on campus and among their peers. In order to widen the exposure of the youth ambassadors, there would be different themes of experiential learning every year. For this first year of the launch of the Ambassador Scheme, youth ambassadors would gain exposure to persons with visual impairment (PVI) and ethnic minorities. Exposure to people with physical disabilities might be arranged for the next year.

10. A Member was impressed by the amount of work the Commission had done in the past three months and she thanked the Commission for the hard work to promote equal opportunities and social inclusiveness.

11. Members noted EOC Paper No. 11/2022.

Reports of the Legal & Complaints Committee, Community Participation & Publicity Committee, Policy, Research & Training Committee and Administration & Finance Committee

(EOC Paper No. 12/2022; Agenda Item No. 4)

12. Members were invited to take note of the important matters raised and decisions made at the four EOC Committee meetings held during the period from

September to November 2022 as contained in EOC Paper No. 12/2022.

(Dr Theresa CUNANAN joined the meeting at this juncture.)

13. A Member observed that due to the ageing population, the use of wheelchairs would be increasingly ubiquitous for day-to-day physical activities. Sharing the experience of two brothers who needed to take frequent vacation leave for lifting their mother down the stairs at the entrance of her residing building so that she could go outside, it was noted that not all persons, including carers, were aware of that the building management had a duty to provide barrier-free facilities, such as a ramp, to facilitate PWD's access and egress. She suggested that more public education and advocacy work could be done so that people could better understand their rights to barrier-free accessibility. C/EOC said the Commission had always accorded high importance to improving barrier-free accessibility for persons with mobility disabilities. He echoed the Member's viewpoint that more support and encouragement should be given to carers. He also said that the appeal for such concern had been expressed through a recently published op-ed article. The Commission would continue to advocate for concerns for carers through different avenues.

14. A Member noticed that a sports stadium of a reputable corporation in Hong Kong was not fully barrier-free. There were a few stairs at its door front but no elevator was available for visitors, causing inconvenience to wheelchair-users and the elderly. It would hence be quite impactful if the EOC would intervene and advise the corporation to conform to the prevailing barrier-free accessibility standards.

15. In response to a Member's question about the "*Study on Perceptions of Stigmatisation and Discrimination of Persons with Mental Illness in the Workplace*" (the Study), Ag HPRT said that the delay in the release of the research findings was due to the turnover of the subject officer in mid-2022 and the necessary lead time

for the new coming recruit to familiarise with various researches in progress and to cross-check the data collected by the commissioned research team for the Study. She said that the research report would hopefully be released by Q1/2023.

16. Noted the success of the Equal Opportunities Employer Recognition Scheme and the Racial Diversity and Inclusion Charter for Employers, another Member said recognition awarded by the EOC had been valued by many partners and stakeholders. In connection with the relief of the epidemic situation recently, more people would go out to places like shopping arcades to shop and have entertainment. With a view to promoting social inclusiveness for people with mobility disabilities and at the same time making available the information for consumers, the Member said launching a similar recognition scheme for barrier-free shopping centres/buildings could be explored so as to provide incentives to the building management of these shopping arcades to raise the barrier-free accessibility standards for attracting more business opportunities. ED/O was in support of the Member's suggestion and remarked that recognition and awards would be a more effective way to encourage compliance than punishment. He added that the accessibility standards had been revised several times but old buildings would not be required to comply with the new standards in retrospect. As such, the provision of barrier-free facilities to meet the latest standards in these old buildings was only voluntary rather than law-enforceable.

17. Members expressed their support for the idea of launching a recognition scheme in relation to barrier-free accessibility in the commercial sector. C/EOC said it would be worthwhile to instill the relevant concepts amongst the youth ambassadors as well. Also, the Policy, Research and Training Committee, Policy, Research and Training Division and Corporate Communications Division could work together to explore strategies and viable ways to make the city to be a more access-friendly place.

18. Members noted EOC Paper No. 12/2022.

(The Hon Vincent CHENG left the meeting at this juncture.)

Attending Board/Committee Meetings via a Video Conferencing Platform

(EOC Paper No. 13/2022; Agenda Item No. 5)

19. DCPS presented the request procedures and guidelines on attending Board/Committee Meetings via Zoom as contained in EOC Paper No. 13/2022 for Members' information.

20. Members noted that the meetings of the EOC Board and the four Committees (EOC Meetings) had been held face-to-face primarily. This mode had facilitated effective communication and candid discussions in meetings, in particular when discussion items were sensitive. On some occasions when Members were not able to attend EOC Meetings in-person due to personal circumstances, joining EOC Meetings by conference calling via telephone line had all along been an exceptional attendance mode.

21. Members noted that after having considered the feedback about the use of conference calling, including the problems of getting simultaneous interpretation (SI) service over the phone, the EOC office had thoroughly reviewed the risks and practicality of using virtual meeting platforms in case that threatening pandemic situation revived or special needs of individual Members arose. As a result of the review, a recommendation had been made to C/EOC to deploy Zoom, one of the widely used video conferencing tools used in both the public and private sectors, as another exceptional mode for attending EOC Meetings.

22. Members noted that C/EOC had accepted the recommendation on deploying Zoom to attend EOC Meetings remotely under pandemic or unforeseen circumstances from 2023 onwards after having considered the functionalities of

Zoom including its capabilities to accommodate the provision of SI service, and the technological measures taken by Zoom to address its security flaws over the past years.

23. Members noted that as and when the Government's group gathering restrictions or social distancing measures in the community disallowed the conduct of a face-to-face EOC meeting, a recommendation would be made by Director (Corporate Planning and Services) on whether or not holding the meeting via Zoom in place of a physical meeting. On an individual level, a Member might request to attend EOC Meetings via Zoom under special or unforeseen circumstances when his/her attendance in-person was not possible or conferencing calling via telephone line was not practicable when SI service was required. The request should be made to C/EOC as soon as practicable, preferably at least two working days before the meeting so that the EOC office could make logistical arrangements in the meantime. Members opting to use this new mode would be requested to follow the guidelines set out in Appendix to EOC Paper No. 13/2022.

24. A Member expressed her appreciation to the EOC office to make available a new mode that also would facilitate the use of SI service for attending EOC Meetings under special circumstances. C/EOC supplemented that the guidelines set out in Appendix to EOC Paper No. 13/2022 would serve to ensure the Meetings' confidentiality and IT security and they would be administered flexibly as and when appropriate.

25. Members noted EOC Paper No. 13/2022.

Extending the Current EOC Strategic Plan to end of 2023

(EOC Paper No. 14/2022; Agenda Item No. 6)

26. DCPS presented to Members the plan to extend the current EOC Strategic

Plan 2020 – 2022 (Current Plan) for one year to the end of Year 2023 as contained in EOC Paper No. 14/2022.

27. Members noted that the Current Plan was developed after having solicited the views of a host of stakeholders, consultation with EOC Members and thorough discussions in the last EOC Strategic Retreat held in October 2019. From the views and comments expressed in group and open floor discussions in the last Strategic Retreat, the emerged key thematic focuses were consolidated and taken forward as five strategic goals under the Current Plan. They were: (i) setting in place a stronger anti-discrimination legal framework; (ii) maintaining an efficient, effective, and victim-centric redress system for complaints; (iii) developing a stronger evidence and knowledge base about discrimination; (iv) reducing inequality among communities at higher risks of discrimination; and (v) delivering organisational excellence.

28. The Current Plan was originally devised to be renewed with a new plan running for 2023 to 2025 with the updated priority areas gathered from a retreat lined up in Q3 or Q4 of 2022. The advent of the COVID-19 epidemic situation since early 2020 and the fifth wave of COVID-19 throughout 2022 had brought about various social distancing measures which had caused difficulties for the Commission to take forward its endeavours and programmes in full swing as per planned, as well as withheld the plan for holding a Strategic Retreat to discuss strategic work priorities for the next Strategic Plan. Besides, there would be a total of six Members (representing around one-third of the EOC Board) completing their usual six-year term by May 2023, and new Members would come on board accordingly. In view of the above, Members noted that C/EOC and Management Team had deliberated in detail on the way forward, and were of the same view that the Current Plan should be extended for one more year till the end of Year 2023.

29. C/EOC added that holding a Strategic Retreat involved an array of organising and planning work. The EOC office would start preparing for the next

Strategic Retreat to be held in Q3/2023.

30. Members noted that the public would be informed of the one-year extension of the Current Plan via the EOC Website. Members would be continuously updated on the progress and results in the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023 on an annual basis. The next round of reporting had been scheduled for March 2023 in the EOC meeting.

31. Members noted EOC Paper No. 14/2022.

Tentative EOC Meeting Schedules for 2023

(EOC Paper No. 15/2022; Agenda Item No. 7)

32. Members noted the tentative meeting schedule for 2023 as contained in EOC Paper No. 15/2022.

IV. Any Other Business

Support for Persons with Visual Impairment (PVI) on Administering Medications

33. Ag HPRT briefed Members on the information provided by the Hospital Authority (HA) on its support provided for PVI after Policy, Research and Training Division issued a letter to HA. Members noted that HA had put in place a number of measures to ensure PVI could administer their medications timely and safely. There were mobile apps “HA Go” and “TouchMed” available for patients to obtain detailed drug information, including the main indication and possible side effects. In addition, HA pharmacy had partnered with relevant patient groups to offer enhanced dispensing service by way of a “Reader Pen Service”. Eligible patients

would be given a portable Reader Pen device to scan the audio label on the drug packs to listen to the pre-recorded drug information which was the same as that printed on the dispensing labels. Members noted that the HA would step up their effort to promote their support for PVI and how PVI could get the support. The EOC initiated to publicise these supportive measures offered by HA via EOC's E-News on 14 December 2022.

(Prof Andy CHIU left the meeting at this juncture.)

34. There being no other business, the Meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm.

V. Date of Next Meeting

35. The next regular EOC Meeting was scheduled for **16 March 2023 (Thursday) at 2:30 p.m.**

Equal Opportunities Commission

January 2023