

**Minutes of the One Hundred and Forty-fourth Meeting of
The Equal Opportunities Commission
held on 19 December 2024 (Thursday) at 2:30 pm in the
Equal Opportunities Commission's Conference Room**

Present

Ms Linda LAM Mei-sau, SBS	Chairperson [C/EOC]
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP	(via video-conferencing)
Ms Rosanna CHOI Yi-tak, MH	
Miss CHOW Lily	
Dr Theresa CUNANAN	
Mr FONG James Mathew	(via video-conferencing)
Mr Simon LAM Ken-chung	
Mr Vishal MELWANI	
Dr Henry SHIE Wai-hung, MH	
Ms Anna THOMPSON	
Miss Shirley TO Shuk-yi	
Ms Linda TSANG Chi-man	
Dr Rizwan ULLAH, MH	(via video-conferencing)
Dr Vincent WONG Wai-lun	
Dr Kitty WU Kit-ying, JP	
Dr Ferrick CHU Chung-man	Secretary Executive Director (Operations) [ED/O]

Absent with apologies

Ms Queenie CHAN Lai-kwan, MH
Mr Gary WONG Chi-him, MH, JP

In attendance

Mr Ivan LUK Chi-cheung	Executive Director (Enforcement) [ED/E]
Ms Lisa CHAN Kit-ching	Director, Corporate Planning and Services [DCPS]
Mr Tony SIU Kit-hung	Director, Complaint Services [DCS]
Mr Allan MAN Sui-lun	Chief Legal Counsel [CLC]
Ms Doris TSUI Ue-ting	Head, Policy, Research and Training [HPRT]
Mr Owen FUNG Heung-wang	Acting Head, Corporate Communications [Ag HCC]

Mr Raymond HO Wing-keung	Senior Equal Opportunities Officer, Ethnic Minorities Unit [SEOO(EMU)]
Ms Susana SOO	Senior Equal Opportunities Officer, Anti-Sexual Harassment Unit [SEOO(ASHU)]
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 EOC Board Members (Members) to the 144th Meeting. C/EOC informed Members that Dr Rizwan ULLAH had joined the meeting via video conference. The Hon Vincent CHENG and Mr James FONG would also be joining the meeting via video conference, and Dr Henry SHIE had informed that he would join the meeting at a later time. Apologies for absence were received from Ms Queenie CHAN due to a clash of meeting schedules and Mr Gary WONG who was out of town.

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

Confirmation of Minutes of the 143rd Meeting on 19 September 2024

2. The draft minutes of the 143rd EOC Meeting held on 19 September 2024 were issued to Members on 16 October 2024. No request for amendments was received. Members confirmed the minutes of the 143rd EOC Meeting without amendments.

III. Matters Arising (Agenda Item No. 2)

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

IV. New Agenda Items

Chairperson's Quarterly Report

(EOC Paper No. 11/2024; Agenda Item No. 3)

4. EOC Paper No. 11/2024 contained the important work done by the EOC for the period from September to November 2024. C/EOC highlighted four key areas for Members' information.

(Ms Anna THOMPSON and Dr Henry SHIE joined the meeting at this juncture. At the same juncture, The Hon Vincent CHENG and Mr James FONG also joined the meeting via video-conference.)

A. Media Statements, Topical Issues and Major Events

5. Members noted that the EOC proactively responded to the media reports on two wheelchair users being denied entry into restaurants on two different occasions. The EOC took the opportunity to raise public awareness of the rights of people with disabilities (PWDs) to participate fully in all aspects of society, as well as the "How to Support Persons with Disabilities: Practical Guide on Universal Design for Catering Services" (the Guide) published by the EOC in 2023. The Policy, Research and Training Division (PRTD) also approached the restaurant concerned to provide advice and offered training to its shop owner and staff members. It was noted that the matter was quickly resolved, as the restaurant undertook to provide a portable ramp at the entrance and rearrange the seating to enable accessibility for all. PRTD planned to hold further awareness training activities

for the catering service industry to enhance the awareness of the rights of PWDs and the Guide.

6. With regard to a media report about a child being denied admission to a kindergarten and that the child's parents had sought help from the EOC, Members noted the report from the management team. Yet, the EOC did not provide any comments to the media about this case as there was a need to keep the case being handled confidential. C/EOC assured Members that the Commission would respond appropriately and promptly to matters concerning equal opportunities and handle all discrimination cases within the remit of the anti-discrimination laws.

7. The Universal Design Award Scheme (UDAS) Presentation Ceremony was held on 1 November 2024 at Hong Kong Palace Museum. The event was attended by over 300 guests, including seven EOC Members, i.e. Ms Rosanna CHOI, Miss Lily CHOW, Dr Theresa CUNANAN, Mr Simon LAM, Dr Henry SHIE, Dr Rizwan ULLAH, and Mr Gary WONG. C/EOC thanked Members for their support, in particular Ms Rosanna Choi and Mr Simon Lam who participated in the judging sessions to help select the awardees. The inaugural UDAS was concluded with fruition, giving out 281 awards to 270 premises spanning a wide range of sectors. The success of the Scheme was well received by the legislative councillors, as reported at the meeting of the Panel on Constitutional Affairs of the Legislative Council held on 16 December 2024.

B. EOC's work on Anti-Sexual Harassment

8. On the progress of EOC's work to promote anti-sexual harassment awareness, Members noted that the PRTD and the Anti-Sexual Harassment Unit (ASHU) had provided training and promotion to staff and students of tertiary institutions since April 2024 to prepare them for the orientation activities in the summer of 2024. The ASHU also organised an interactive workshop, namely "Play Smart" Joint-University Workshop on Addressing Sexual Harassment on Campus (the Workshop) in the EOC office on 5 August 2024 for student leaders,

residence tutors and staff supporting student activities from all eight UGC-funded universities, immediately before the universities rolled out their orientation activities. The momentum in combating sexual harassment on campus carried on after the Workshop. As of the end of October 2024, the ASHU had reached around 3 000 persons, including students and staff members through delivering training sessions and the Workshop.

C. Promoting Equal Opportunities for Racially Disadvantaged Population

9. The Racial Diversity and Inclusion Charter for Employers (the Charter) network had expanded beyond 500 signatories. Through the support from this valuable network, the Ethnic Minorities Unit (EMU) had mobilised nearly 40 employers to provide job opportunities for the ethnic community in two initiatives. One of the two initiatives was a Racial Diversity & Inclusion Recruitment Fair held in partnership with the Hong Kong Federation of Ethnic Communities at Sikh Temple on 20 October 2024, which offered a total of 500 vacancies in 80 positions of different qualification levels and with accommodations on language barriers. The other initiative was a dedicated job booth at the ‘Building A Multicultural Workplace Job Fair’ held on 13 November 2024, which showcased 70 job positions from 22 Charter signatories. The job positions primarily required university qualifications at a professional level, while removing the language proficiency requirements in writing and reading Chinese.

D. Strengthening Collaboration with Mainland Organisations

10. Members noted that EOC Member Ms Rosanna CHOI and nine staff members joined a national studies course at the National Academy of Governance in Beijing from 9 to 13 September 2024. On 8 November 2024, the EOC hosted a visit by the China Disabled Persons’ Federation (CDPF). On 9 and 10 November 2024, the EOC sent a delegation to attend the 3rd Greater Bay Area Exchange Forum on Synergistic Promotion of Disability Rights and Services (the Forum), which was co-hosted by the China Disability Research Society and

Shenzhen University. At the Forum, C/EOC delivered a speech in the opening ceremony to introduce EOC's role in implementing the Disability Discrimination Ordinance and the Commission's strategic goals in promoting universal design and encouraging employers to hire talents with disabilities. In addition, EOC senior officers introduced the complaint-handling procedures, including the adoption of conciliation, and recent efforts in promoting universal design, including the successful completion of Universal Design Award Scheme 2024/25, and the sharing of good practices of universal design.

11. A Member expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to join the national studies course in September 2024 and appreciated DCPS's leadership and other EOC staff's performance during the course. On a separate note, she suggested that the EOC might consider setting out a response timeframe for incidents of media interests involving EOC's work to further enhance EOC's image. In addition, she congratulated the success of the Universal Design Award Scheme 2024/25 (UDAS) and shared with Members the feedback from some participants, including the suggestions of increasing photo-taking spots and managing the photo-taking time of the presentation ceremony. In response, C/EOC said the EOC was mindful about the timing for providing responses to the media on different issues. For example, if the matter involved EOC's handling of an individual case, an early response might undermine EOC's impartiality in the investigation process. In general, media statement would be strategically issued to explain to members of the public their rights to equal opportunities as protected under the anti-discrimination ordinances. On the feedback about the UDAS award presentation ceremony, HPRT thanked the Member for her support and suggestions. She said the UDAS Project Team had gained valuable experience from this inaugural event and would endeavour to strike a balance and manage the time on photo-taking with the large number of awardees in future, if resources for re-running the UDAS were available.

12. Another Member congratulated the EOC on the success of the three racial diversity and inclusion events held in October and November 2024, with some of

them dubbed as the celebrations for the 15th Anniversary of the Implementation of the Race Discrimination Ordinance. In response to the questions raised by this Member, C/EOC and DCPS said that the Chinese proficiency level requirement for EOC's job openings was always dependent on the genuine need of the posts and hiring divisions/units would always be flexible to ensure talents with the right calibre were recruited. In addition, the EOC would explore with the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region about the feasibility of providing simultaneous interpretation services for the national studies course in the future to allow participation of non-Chinese speaking participants.

13. A third Member expressed appreciation for the leadership of C/EOC and committee conveners. Despite resource limitation, the Commission had always exerted its best effort to accomplish its work objectives to uphold equal opportunities for all.

14. Members noted EOC Paper No. 11/2024.

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

(EOC Paper No. 12/2024; Agenda Item No. 4)

15. EOC Paper No. 12/2024 reported to Members on the important matters raised and decisions made at the recent meetings of the four committees held during the period from October to December 2024.

16. Members noted EOC Paper No. 12/2024.

Tentative EOC Meeting Schedule for 2025

(EOC Paper No. 13/2024; Agenda Item No. 5)

17. Members noted the tentative meeting schedule for 2025 as contained in EOC Paper No. 13/2024.

V. Any Other Business

Refusal of Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme (VHIS) for Persons with Different Mental Health Needs

18. A Member said that there had been increasing reports on refusal of VHIS coverage for persons with different mental health needs by insurance companies. In response, ED/E said insurance companies usually distinguished between people based on individual attributes to tailor insurance premiums and policies to ensure business profitability. Differential treatment is permitted under the anti-discrimination ordinances if such could be supported by actuarial or statistical data upon which it is reasonable to rely. Consumers who believed that they were discriminated against by the insurance companies based on their personal attributes could lodge complaints with the EOC. ED/O added that back in around the year 2000, the EOC had studied insurance issues under the anti-discrimination legislation and apart from others, had advised members of the insurance industry to refrain from imposing blanket exclusions or increasing premiums based on individual attributes. In the past years, the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers (HKFI) provided assistance to consumers who had difficulties in acquiring insurance coverage. DCS echoed ED/E's call for consumers to lodge complaints with the EOC and assured Members that EOC's complaint services officers would always stand ready to assist.

Annual Staff Outing on 30 November 2024

19. A Member expressed appreciation to EOC for holding the annual staff outing on 30 November 2024. She found this family-friendly activity a joyful experience to join.

20. There being no other business, the Meeting was adjourned at 3:20 pm.

VI. Date of Next Meeting

21. The next regular EOC Meeting was scheduled for **20 March 2025 (Thursday) at 2:30pm.**

*Equal Opportunities Commission
January 2025*