

Members of the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities
The Legislative Council
of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
of the People's Republic of China

2 June 2017

Dear Chairman, Deputy Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Request for extension of the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities

As registered non-governmental organizations that provide support for and are concerned about the well-being of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities ("Subcommittee") for studying and following up policies and measures relating to ethnic minority issues over the past six months since its formation. We are now writing jointly to request for an extension of the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities for a further 12 months based on the following justifications.

Firstly, we understand that there are only two more meetings scheduled before the end of the one-year term of the Subcommittee. However, a number of items on the Subcommittee's Work Plan (LC Paper No. CB(2)201/16-17(01)) has not been discussed yet, namely:

- *implementation and review of the Race Discrimination Ordinance,*
- *difficulties encountered by ethnic minorities in applying for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Passport,*
- *poverty situation of ethnic minorities and difficulties encountered by ethnic minorities in applying for the Low-income Working Family Allowance ("LIFA") (e.g. ethnic minorities who were employed as casual workers were unable to provide proofs of employment when applying for LIFA),*
- *disparity between the remuneration rates applicable to ethnic minorities and other local people employed by the Government as interpreters, and*
- *lack of venues in districts for ethnic minorities to conduct religious and cultural activities.*

We foresee that it is unlikely the Subcommittee could cover all the remaining topics within two meetings, and hence an extension seems appropriate to complete the current Work Plan.

Secondly, we hope that the Subcommittee would provide sufficient opportunity for the public to submit their views through public hearings. We are pleased that the Subcommittee has invited public deputation on three occasions, as public participation particularly from ethnic minorities themselves is crucial in the discussion of policies and formulation of appropriate measures. At the last public hearing on 8 May 2017, three topics (housing, healthcare and support service centres) were covered in the same session, which presented to be a challenge in engaging in in-depth and meaningful discussions on each topic. We hope that each topic would be given due attention and time for discussion in order to facilitate the Subcommittee's role in making appropriate recommendations.

Thirdly, there are a number of issues beyond the Work Plan that are of importance to the well-being of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong and warrant the Subcommittee's attention. Ethnic minorities constitute 6.4% of the whole population in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2012) and thus their issues of concern are of our entire society's interest. Such issues of concern include mental health support for ethnic minorities, using Putonghua as the medium of instruction for ethnic minorities, and support for non-Chinese students with special

education needs. In particular, we wish to draw attention to a few significant issues that emerged from the previous Subcommittee meetings for follow up:

- *the motion passed at the 12 December 2016 meeting, “Education for children of ethnic minorities – implementation progress of the 'Chinese language as the second language' curriculum, placement of ethnic minority students and support measures to these students and to schools admitting them”,*
- *the motion passed at the 13 February 2017 meeting, “This Subcommittee requests the Government to expeditiously set up an Ethnic Minority Employment Division in the Labour Department to coordinate an effective employment strategy for ethnic minorities and provide appropriate employment support services for non-Chinese speaking people”,*
- *the motion passed at the 10 April 2017 meeting, “This Subcommittee urges the Food and Health Bureau and the Hospital Authority to jointly review the medical policy on providing support for ethnic minorities and improve the existing measures for providing translation and interpretation services, and requests that teams of translators and interpreters be established to provide translation and interpretation services on a hospital cluster basis, so that ethnic minorities are provided with more appropriate and precise public healthcare services”,*
- *establishing a central unit in the Government for coordinating ethnic minority policies across bureaux,*
- *and setting up an accreditation system for interpreters to ensure standard and quality.*

Finally, in view of the new term of Government commencing July 2017, we wish to follow up on Mrs. Carrie Lam’s election manifesto with regards to policies relating to ethnic minorities. Areas listed in her manifesto include: reviewing the Race Discrimination Ordinance; enhancing education measures to help non-Chinese speaking students learn Chinese; encouraging teachers to acquire specialized skills in teaching Chinese as a second language; reviewing systematically the requirements of written Chinese proficiency for various grades of the civil service; increasing the appointment of ethnic minorities to Government statutory bodies and committees; and enhancing public education to ensure that all Government publications convey the message of racial harmony and equality for all. We believe that extending the Subcommittee for one year will facilitate the monitoring of the new Government in delivering such manifesto promises.

We would like to once again express our appreciation to the Subcommittee in protecting the rights of ethnic minorities, and we sincerely believe that a one-year extension of its period shall help ensure sustainability of the Subcommittee’s significant efforts in ensuring racial equality and harmony.

Yours sincerely,

Association Concerning Sexual Violence Against Women
Catholic Diocese of HK Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Workers – Kowloon
Health In Action
Hong Kong Christian Service
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children
Hong Kong Unison
KELY Support Group
Yuen Long Town Hall
(organizations listed in alphabetical order)