



The Hong Kong Association of Business and Professional Women

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The Hong Kong Association of Business and Professional Women Submission to LWB on the Implementation of the Convention

The Hong Kong Association of Business and Professional Women (BPWHK) would like to offer our view on the implementation of CEDAW in Hong Kong regarding the performance of Women's Commission (WoC) and Legislative Council (LegCo). We do so with regard to the following documents:

1. *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW/the Convention)
2. *The Concluding Observations on the Combined Seventh and Eighth Periodic Reports of China* (the Concluding Observations)
3. *The Outline of the Fourth Report of the HKSAR under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (the Outline)

Our Reservation about WoC

In the Concluding Observations, the Committee addresses their reservation about WoC as follows:

50. The Committee is concerned that the Women's Commission, which is mandated to promote the advancement of women in Hong Kong, China, has a weak mandate and lacks the resources necessary to undertake gender mainstreaming and other activities.
51. The Committee recommends that Hong Kong, China, should strengthen the

mandate of the Women's Commission by, inter alia, providing adequate financial and human resources so that it can effectively undertake its activities as the machinery for the advancement of women.

In the Outline, the Government responds to such reservation as:

Article 2

We will address paragraphs 50 – 51 of the Concluding Observations with regard to the Women's Commission. We will inform the Committee of the work of the Women's Commission (WoC) including the provision of an enabling environment and empowerment of women, etc.

BPWHK appreciates the attention that the Government pays to the reservation of the Committee, and the effort as well as contribution made by WoC. However, in line with the Committee, we concern that WoC lacks not only financial and human resources but also legal and legislative resources, which is a violation of Article 2 in the Convention.

Our Reservation about LegCo

In the Concluding Observations, the Committee addresses their reservation about the low level of women's participation in political activities as:

58. The Committee recalls its previous concluding observations

(CEDAW/C/CHN/CO/6, para. 39) and remains concerned about the low level of representation of women in politics, including in functional constituencies. The Committee is also concerned that no efforts have been made to conduct a study in order to understand the impact that the electoral system of functional constituencies has on the equal participation of women in political life.

59. The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/CHN/CO/6, para. 40) and recommends that Hong Kong, China, undertake:

(a) Concrete measures, including the introduction of temporary special measures,

in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 and general recommendation No. 23, to expedite the representation of women in politics;

(b) A study on the impact that the electoral system of functional constituencies has on the equal participation of women in political life.

Similarly, in the Outline, the Government responds to such reservation as:

Article 5

We will inform the Committee of any significant developments since the previous report. We will also respond to paragraphs 58 and 59 of the Concluding Observations with regard to women's representation and participation in politics. This part will report on the participation of women in the Legislative Council and the efforts in nurturing women leaders.

Again, BPWHK appreciates the Government pays attention that to the reservation of the Committee and we are glad to see the Government addresses women's participation in LegCo in this section. We also aware that the level of women's participation in political activities has been increasing over the past 10 years (2006-2017), however the statistics is yet not satisfying according to Hong Kong Women in Figures 2017 (WoC, 2018). Even though Ms. Carrie Lam has won the Chief Executive Election in 2017 to become the first female Chief Executive in Hong Kong, this does not indicate that women in general are ensured with equal access to political activities, which violates the Article 7 in the Convention. For instance, the members in the Executive Council by sex are 4 for female and 27 for male respectively (WoC, 2018). In addition, only 12 elected members in LegCo are female while 58 elected members are male (WoC, 2018). Last but not least, women only constitute 37.2% percent of public servant and men constitute 62.8% (WoC, 2018). BPWHK believes that while it is important to continue to increase the representation of women in politics, it is equally important to enable women in general to participate in the formulation of government policy, which is the primary responsibility of

LegCo.

Our Suggestion: The Collaboration between WoC and LegCo

With reference to the website of WoC and LegCo, BPWHK notices that:

1. By searching through the attendance list of WoC meetings, we find that the WoC meetings are not open to the general public; the public consultations will only be held regarding special events, CEDAW consultation for instance, which means WoC undertakes the primary responsibility of gender mainstreaming but does not provide women as well as general public with frequent opportunities to express their opinion on relevant issues.
2. By searching through the committees and subcommittees of LegCo, we find that no committee or subcommittee with an exclusive emphasis on women's rights has ever been appointed, which means LegCo provides general public with access to participate in the formulation of government policy but the attention they pay to the empowerment of women is not enough.
3. During public consultation session hold by LWB and WoC on April 25 2018, over twenty individuals and representatives of women's organisations shared their concerns regarding CEDAW from various perspectives, concluding fulltime homemakers, LGBT issues, sex workers and etc. This makes us realise that there is a need for the collaboration between WoC and LegCo to provide the general public, especially women, with access to participate in the formulation of government policy concerning gender mainstreaming.

The advocacy team of BPWHK has experienced monitoring the website of WoC and LegCo for months but ended up with no opportunity to advocate for the empowerment of business and professional women in Hong Kong. Our own experience also illustrates the necessity of such collaboration. Given the expertise of Ms. Yuen-han Chan in both WoC and LegCo, we believe such collaboration is possible and will contribute to the empowerment of women in the long run.

The Hong Kong Association of Business and Professional Women
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References

1. Labour and Welfare Bureau. (2018) An outline of the topics to be covered in the fourth report of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Available from: http://www.lwb.gov.hk/CEDAW/eng/CEDAW%204th%20report_Public%20Consultation_E.pdf [Accessed May 2018].
2. The United Nation. (1979) The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Available from: http://www.lwb.gov.hk/UNCEDAW/documents/CEDAW_E.pdf [Accessed May 2018].
3. Women's Commission. (2018) Hong Kong Women in Figures 2017. Available from: http://www.women.gov.hk/download/research/HK_Women2017_e.pdf [Accessed May 2018].