

LCQ20: Enhancing women's participation in Public Sector ASBs

Following is a question by the Hon Emily Lau Wai-hing and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Ms Florence Hui Hiu-fai, in the Legislative Council today (July 14):

Question:

In the consultation paper "Review of the Role and Functions of Public Sector Advisory and Statutory Bodies" published in 2003, the authorities have set a minimum ratio of 25% of non-official members of either gender in advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs) and stipulated that in general, a non-official member of an ASB should neither serve for more than six years in any one capacity (six-year rule) nor as a member on more than six boards or committees at the same time (six-board rule). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) given that the information provided to this Council by the Secretary for Home Affairs indicates that as at April 30, 2009, 167 non-official members appointed by the Government (representing 3.05% of all government appointed non-officials) had served in the same capacity on the ASB concerned for more than six years, while six persons (representing 0.17% of all government appointed non-officials) were appointed by the Government to serve as non-official members on seven ASBs, of the total number of non-official members appointed by the Government who had served in the same capacity on the ASB concerned for more than six years at present; the reasons for further appointing them; the number of persons currently serving as members on more than six ASBs at the same time; and the reasons for appointing them;

(b) whether it will enact legislation to ensure that various policy bureaux and government departments abide by the six-year and six-board rules in appointing those members; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(c) given that the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution recommended a target for various nations and regions that 30% of their leadership positions be taken up by women by 1995, whether the authorities have considered setting a deadline by which women's participation rates in various ASBs shall all reach 30%; if they have, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(d) given that the data provided to this Council by SHA indicate that as at April 30, 2009, more than 40 ASBs had no female government-appointed member at all, whether the authorities have any plan to give priority to such bodies so that they will reach the target on women's participation rate in (c) as early as possible; if they have such plans, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(e) given that the Home Affairs Bureau has indicated that it encourages women to contribute their curriculum vitae (CVs) for inclusion in the Central Personality Index (CPI), of the concrete measures implemented by the authorities in this regard; how many women have included their CVs in the CPI so far?

Reply:

President,

(a) As at May 31, 2010, 243 non-official members appointed by the Government (representing 4.29% of all government appointed non-officials) had served in the same capacity of the advisory and statutory body (ASB) concerned for more than six years. Among them, two persons served as non-official members on more than six ASBs. These two persons are however serving on six boards only as at early July.

In making appointments to ASBs, the Government aims to secure the services of the most suitable persons to meet the requirements of the board or committee concerned. In making appointments, the Government will consider a host of factors including a candidate's ability, expertise, experience, integrity and commitment to public service; the functions and nature of the board or committee concerned, etc. For statutory bodies, the appointing authorities will also consider the relevant statutory requirements. In considering the above factors, the appointing authorities aim to achieve the objective that the composition of ASBs broadly reflects the interests and views of the community, and the principle of appointment by merit. The appointing authorities may, on occasions, consider it necessary and appropriate to make an exception to the "Six-year rule" and "Six-board rule", having regard to the circumstances of the ASBs concerned.

(b) The Six-year and Six-board Rules ("6-6 Rules") are general guidelines. By issuing notices to the relevant appointing authorities six months before the expiry of the membership of ASBs, the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) would remind appointing authorities to take active measures to ensure that appointments made by them would

comply with the "6-6 Rules" as far as practicable, in order to avoid overloading the non-official members. Maintaining the "6-6 Rules" can, on the one hand, encourage appointing authorities to attract more suitable talents, and on the other hand, allow suitable flexibility for appointing authorities to formulate appointment strategies most appropriate to individual ASBs. We do not consider it necessary to enact a legislation for the "6-6 Rules".

(c) Appointing more women to ASBs is our goal. However, for some ASBs, the majority of the practitioners in the sectors relevant to the ASBs are male. Some candidates are mainly recommended by relevant professional bodies and institutions. Also, relevant appointing authorities may only consider enhancing the women's participation in ASBs when the tenure of the current members expires. As such, it is not possible for the appointing authorities to enhance the women's participation for certain ASB within a short period of time. The Government has no plan to set a deadline for all ASBs to achieve the new 30% gender benchmark.

(d) The Administration has issued guidelines to bureaux and departments to appeal for their attention to the women's participation in ASBs under their purview and also for making efforts in achieving the new gender benchmark (30%). We would remind appointing authorities from time to time the importance of further enhancing women's participation in ASBs, and also request them to draw the attention of all relevant organisations which are involved in candidate nominations to the Government's efforts in enhancing women's participation.

(e) HAB does not only remind appointing authorities of the importance of further enhancing women's participation in ASBs. It also encourages bureaux and departments to invite women who are able and willing to participate in the work of ASBs to contribute their curriculum vitae (CVs) for inclusion in the Central Personality Index (CPI). To facilitate members of the public to supply their personal information for inclusion in the CPI, a CV form has been put onto the website of HAB for free download. Furthermore, the Women's Commission has recently issued letters to women's associations and professional institutions, inviting them to encourage women who are able and willing to participate in the work of ASBs to contribute CVs to the CPI maintained by Government, in order to further enhance women's participation in ASBs.

As at May 2010, 6,891 female CVs were kept in the CPI.

Ends/Wednesday, July 14, 2010

