

Chapter 12

Concluding Remarks

12.1 In accepting the invitation to conduct a GSR for the Disciplined Services, the Standing Committee well appreciates that the assignment is an important and challenging task. It covers 53 000 staff members in the seven Disciplined Services, which together constitute over 32% of the total establishment of the civil service. Having the benefit of visiting the Departments, talking to front-line staff, reviewing the written submissions and having rounds of informal sessions with the management and staff, we have gained a better understanding of the challenges facing each of the Disciplined Services. We would like to express our profound respect and heartfelt appreciation to the men and women in the Disciplined Services whose commitment and dedication have contributed to the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong. Today, Hong Kong remains one of the safest and least corrupt metropolitan cities in the world, riding over many challenges with success. These remarkable achievements would not have been possible without the support of our world-class, efficient and clean public service, of which the Disciplined Services is an integral and indispensable part. There are many unsung heroes whose professionalism and exemplary acts of bravery deserve our unreserved respect and recognition.

12.2 The GSR involves many stakeholders and most have high expectations as the last comprehensive reviews were conducted some twenty years ago. As stated in our terms of reference, we have endeavoured to provide adequate opportunities for the management and staff to express their views, whether in writing or during informal sessions. Whilst we understand the strong wishes, particularly of the staff representatives, to be apprised of our views, we trust they would also appreciate that it is neither appropriate nor possible for the Standing Committee, as the Chief Executive's adviser, to communicate its recommendations in full before submitting this Report.

12.3 During the GSR, we have taken into account all relevant information and considerations, and make our best judgement after balancing all factors. We have now set out our key findings, considerations and recommendations in this Report. If these recommendations are endorsed, about 80% of the disciplined services staff would have pay improvement in the short term, to varying degrees, and all would benefit in the longer term.

12.4 The submission of this Report marks the conclusion of one stage and the beginning of another. Our mandate is to present our advice to the Chief Executive, and it is entirely the prerogative of the Administration to consider whether, and to what extent, our recommendations should be accepted having regard to political, economic, financial, social and other considerations. We understand that the Administration intends to conduct an extensive consultation exercise. We hope that this Report would serve as a useful basis for this purpose.

12.5 As mentioned in earlier Chapters, pay and conditions of service are only one of the many aspects to address the recruitment, retention, morale and career progression issues facing the Disciplined Services. In our exchanges with the management and staff representatives in the GSR, we have noticed that resource constraints are among the major causes of stress and morale concerns. The civil service implemented a series of cost saving measures such as Enhanced Productivity Programme, containing the size of the civil service and the recruitment freeze at the turn of this century. All these have impact on manpower resources, succession planning and morale across the civil service.

12.6 There are opportunities where the Disciplined Services, as with many large organisations, would benefit from innovative reforms or process re-engineering to optimise deployment and efficiency to meet changing needs. However, given that the Disciplined Services generally involve labour-intensive operation, elaborate command structure, detailed enforcement procedures and limited opportunities for outsourcing, they have encountered substantial challenges in coping with increasing demand whilst fulfilling the service-wide cost saving targets. Some areas of work may warrant critical re-consideration in resource allocation. We encourage the Administration to consider whether there is scope for

increasing manpower, equipment and facilities in the Disciplined Services where necessary and justified. There may be cases for the creation and re-ranking of posts to meet functional demand, and it is for the management to pursue their case through the normal channel. Our observations in this regard are already covered in the relevant Chapters.

Acknowledgements

12.7 We wish to express our sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the GSR through written submissions, arrangements of visits and participation in informal sessions. The seven Disciplined Services have been most helpful in providing us with a wealth of information and clarifications. Our special thanks go to the Departmental Liaison Officers. Last but not the least, our appreciation goes to the Secretary General of the Joint Secretariat for the Advisory Bodies on Civil Service and Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service, and her team for their tireless effort in providing the Standing Committee with excellent support throughout the review process.

