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28 June 2002

By Fax (2877 0750)

Secretary General
 Joint Secretariat for the Advisory Bodies on Civil Service
 and Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service
 Room 701, 7th Floor
 Tower Two, Lippo Centre
 89 Queensway
 Hong Kong

Dear Secretary General,

**Review of
 Civil Service Pay Policy and System**

Thank you for inviting our views on the consultation paper of the Phase I Study of the Task Force on Review of Civil Service Pay Policy and System.

We would like to offer the comments of the departmental management of the Government Supplies Department as set out at Annex.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED SIGNATURE]

for Director of Government Supplies

CW/it

Views of the departmental management of Government Supplies Department

Review of Civil Service Pay Policy and System

The departmental management of the Government Supplies Department has the following views on the questions raised in the following paragraphs of the Task Force's Interim Report:

- (a) Para. 3.23(a), 3.44(a), 3.44(c), 3.44(d) :

We support in-principle that more emphasis should be put on performance-pay. However, this must be accompanied by a vigorous approach to performance measurement and management. When a fair and effective system which is acceptable to staff is in place, consideration may be given to the introduction of performance pay in the form of individual, rather than team-based, performance rewards. The rewards could be awarded to the top performers subject to a pre-set quota. Some fair, transparent and objective criteria need to be worked out for the selection of top performers. This should apply to the senior, middle and lower levels alike.

- (b) Para. 3.23(a) :

We welcome a clean wage policy of paying "all cash" wages in lieu of allowances, housing and medical benefits, etc. This will reduce administrative cost, remove unnecessary rules and related monitoring work, provide staff with greater freedom to spend their income in the ways they like, and perhaps achieve savings if a reduced non-accountable cash amount is provided in lieu of the accountable allowances.

- (c) Para. 3.23(b) & (c):

In principle, all ranks of civil servants should be subject to a common pay policy. Although the disciplined services have their own pay scale, we consider that disciplined and civilian officers alike, all being civil servants, should be subject to the same civil service pay policy.

- (d) Para. 3.23(d), 3.36(a) :

We are mindful that some civil service jobs have no comparables in the private sector and it may not be entirely applicable to compare the two. Nevertheless, broad comparability with the private sector will serve as a reference.

(e) Para. 3.23(e) & (f):

To maintain the stability and morale of the civil service, it is important to provide sufficient pay to attract, retain and motivate suitable staff in the civil service. Government's affordability to pay should not be a major factor for consideration in pay adjustments, otherwise it will put the civil service and the public on opposing camps, with detrimental effect on the service standards provided. It is important to take into account factors such as changes to the pay movements of employees in the private sector, changes to the cost of living, state of the economy, the staff sides' pay claims and civil service morale.

(f) Para. 3.30(a), (c) & (d) :

Flexible pay ranges should be introduced in addition to, rather than as a replacement of, the fixed pay scales. The flexible pay ranges will serve to provide an incentive for outstanding performance. Flexible pay ranges, if introduced, should apply to both disciplined and civilian officers alike. Some mechanism should also be in place to control the additional payment involved in order to ensure that it is within budget.

(g) Para. 3.51(a) :

A cautious approach needs to be taken in considering whether decentralisation of civil service pay administration should be introduced. While the departmental management would enjoy greater flexibility in meeting resource and staffing needs as in the present case of the employment of non-civil service contract staff, there are other problems such as increase in administrative cost, competition with other departments which offer a higher pay and the subsequent staff wastage. This would not be cost-effective as resources, time and efforts in recruitment and training are duplicated. Moreover, decentralisation of pay administration, if introduced, would not be applicable to the general grades staff who are subject to transfer between departments.

(h) Para. 3.51(c) :

The Supplies Assistant and Supplies Attendant grades have an establishment of 354 and 71 respectively. Both are one-rank grades. They are mainly deployed on general storekeeping duties. They are general grades under the central management of the Director of Government Supplies. There may be valid arguments for decentralising the management of these two grades to allow heads of department/bureau greater flexibility in staff deployment. However, there would be loss of economy of scale in recruitment, deployment

and training of staff. From the staff's angle, they may be concerned about the loss of freedom of transfer between departments. The Government Supplies Assistants Association has expressed their objection to departmentalisation of the supplies grades as the rotation of staff to various offices can serve a monitoring purpose and minimize the risk of malpractices. We consider that the feasibility of decentralisation of the Supplies Assistant and Supplies Attendant grades may be further explored in full consultation with the staff.

On the other hand, the Supplies Officer grade and Supplies Supervisor grade, are also general grades under the central management of the Director of Government Supplies. They have an establishment of 182 and 713 respectively. They are employed throughout the Government and are mainly deployed on store management and supplies functions. Due to the common nature of duties in each grade, the central management of these grades facilitates the recruitment, deployment, training and career development of the staff. By the nature of their jobs, many of them are required to have frequent contacts with suppliers. It has been the grade management's policy to regularly rotate the staff to different offices so as to minimize the risk of malpractices if their relationship with the suppliers becomes too intimate. The staff will also benefit from the exposure of working in different work environment which could enhance their career development and effectiveness. Under the present arrangement, they also have claim and aspiration for career advancement and a common promotion prospect. The continued central management of the Supplies Officers and Supplies Supervisor grades certainly has its merits.

(i) Para. 3.51(e) :

While flatter and less hierarchical management structures with fewer rank layers are supported in principle, regard should be made to the level of responsibilities and circumstance of the organisation. The amalgamation of existing grades within broader occupational categories is also supported in principle in view of the increasing demand for a multi-skilled service. However, the detailed proposals must be worked out in full consultation with staff as the successful implementation of the proposals will greatly depend on the staff support.

(j) Para. 3.51(f) :

Introduction of a formal job evaluation system is worthy of consideration. This may provide a fair means of assessing the relative values of different jobs. Such a system, if introduced, should be operated centrally in order to maintain internal relativity of jobs in the civil service.