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Press Statement

Hong Kong Unison responds to Policy Address 2018

The government has announced today in its Policy Address 2018 some new measures concerning ethnic minorities in areas of employment and public services; however, there is not much progress for ethnic minorities' education, which impacts greatly on their social integration and mobility.

The Education Bureau (EDB) will continue to use the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework ("Learning Framework") to support non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students' Chinese learning (para 244.2); reality is that the government implemented the Learning Framework in 2014, but review reports of its effectiveness have still not been released. The Policy Address also mentioned that starting from the 2019/20 school year, the EDB will provide subsidy for kindergartens joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme based on the number of NCS students admitted (para 244.2). But apart from increasing funding for schools, the EDB should also periodically report on the details of such additional specialized funding and policy effectiveness to the public, so as to be accountable to stakeholders and to ensure that the funding can truly promote ethnic minority students' learning.

The Policy Address also mentioned that EDB will continue commissioning post-secondary institutions to provide school-based support services for kindergartens, primary and secondary schools admitting non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students; the school-based curriculum, learning and teaching as well as assessment arrangements will also be *adapted* with reference to the Learning Framework (para 244.2). However, currently most adapted school-based curricula are developed for teaching low level of Chinese so that even ethnic minorities born and raised in Hong Kong only attain a level of Chinese equivalent to mainstream Primary Two at Form 6 graduation. The government should immediately implement a Chinese as Second Language Policy with stage learning objectives coupled with suitable teaching methods to teach students whose mother tongue is not Chinese so that their Chinese ability can reach similar levels as their Chinese peers.

The Policy Address points out that the EDB will provide additional resources to facilitate NCS students' learning of Chinese History in secondary schools (para 244.2). In fact, under the Mother Tongue Policy, most NCS students in mainstream primary and secondary schools have to learn other subjects such as Mathematics and Liberal studies in Chinese, they may even have to use Putonghua, a language foreign to them, to learn Chinese. Perhaps the EDB should consider provide similar or equivalent support to schools on other subjects so that NCS students under the mainstream education system can manage their studies.



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In terms of racial equality, the Policy Address mentioned that the government will seek to introduce the Discrimination Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill into the Legislative Council by the end of this year to take forward eight recommendations of priority, including those for amending the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO), which are found less complex and controversial in the Equal Opportunities Commission's Discrimination Law Review (para 250). However, these eight recommendations do not cover key recommendations that have the greatest impact on the ethnic minority community that civil societies have been fighting for including "making it unlawful for the Government to discriminate in performing its functions or exercising its power". Even if the government successfully amend the eight recommendations for the RDO, the RDO will still be the weakest among the current four local discrimination ordinances.

The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau will refine the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality to ensure their application to all government bureaux, departments and related organisations *providing services for ethnic minorities* (para 244.1). Since all government bureaux and departments serve Hong Kong people, it follows that they directly or indirectly come into contact or serve ethnic minorities who are also Hongkongers. Therefore all bureaux *should* be bound by the Guidelines and not just those that provide services for ethnic minorities. Currently bureaux bound by the Guidelines only provide a checklists of existing and planned measures on the promotion of equality for ethnic minorities, but does not spell out clearly that departments have to consider racial equality when formulating policies. In addition, the Guidelines are not legally binding, neither do they specify a complaint channel; the accountability of the Guidelines is questionable.