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150 to form the Basic Law advisory body

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The final line-up of seats for the 150-strong Basic Law Consultative Committee was announced last night, paving the way for nominations which start today.

The list, which contains a detailed breakdown of seat numbers for the eight stipulated major sectors, was endorsed by the Hongkong members of the Basic Law Drafting Committee on Saturday.

Commentators and representatives of different sectors last night had mixed feelings on the make-up of the membership. Some said their organisations were not adequately represented, while others expressed satisfaction.

According to a lengthy release from the Hongkong members of the drafting committee, letters will be sent to specified organisations in a few days inviting them to recommend representatives to sit on the committee.

The statement, which was issued through the New China News Agency, said newspaper announcements will also urge organisations not specifically invited to recommend members to suggest candidates.

Organisations are given until October 22 to forward their recommendations to the drafting committee's six-member group set up to oversee the establishment of the consultative committee.

The group will then examine the suggestions and finalise a list of names before proposing candidates to sit on the consultative committee.

The consultative committee is expected to be established as soon as the Hongkong members of the drafting committee put their stamp of approval on the membership at a meeting on November 23.

The final line-up of seats contains a number of minor amendments to the original version. The number of representatives to be recommended by the various sectors has been increased from 100 to 101 and those to be hand-picked by Hongkong members of the drafting committee reduced from 50 to 49.

Other modifications include increasing the number of seats for industry and commerce from 30 to 32, and for labour and "grassroots" organisations from 34 to 37.

But seats for the media were reduced from 14 to 11 and for the legal profession from 11 to 10.

Of the 101 seats to be nominated from different sectors, 60 are allocated to specified organisations and 41 to non-specified organisations.

One category, originally entitled "Foreigners," is now entitled "Foreigners' Organisations."

How the committee will be composed

The following is the approved list of groups, professionals and individuals that will be represented on the 150-strong Basic Law Consultative Committee:

- Industry and commerce have been given two more seats to bring their total to 32 or 21.3 per cent.
- The seats allocated to the monetary and real estate sectors remain unchanged as originally proposed — 18 members making 12 per cent.
- A cut in one seat for the legal profession brings its percentage down from 7.5 to 6.7. They will have 10 seats.
- The "other professionals" remain the same at 20.7 per cent — 31 members.
- Media representatives have also been cut from 14 members to 11, bringing their percentage down from 9.5 to 7.3.
- Community groups have been increased from 34 to 37 members, a percentage rise from 23 to 24.7.
- One more seat has been allocated to the religious groups, bringing their total to six and increasing the percentage from 3.5 to 4.
- The number of seats allocated to foreigners remains the same — five members or 3.3 per cent.

The statement said those to be nominated must endorse the constitution of the drafting committee and be representative of their related sectors.

Under normal circumstances, it said, representatives nominated by specified organisations would be accepted provided they did not exceed the stipulated number.

The classification of specified organisations is mainly based on the definition of functional constituencies in the Legislative Council elections, as well as on their representativeness.

Specified organisations also include the Hongkong Federation of Student Unions, the Joint Conference of leaders of six major religions and the Joint Conference of various concerned groups on the Basic Law.

The press release said if nominations from non-specified organisations exceeded the stipulated numbers, the organisations concerned would have to sort it out through consultation.

Only those organisations which registered with the Government before September 28 are entitled to be classified as non-specified organisations.

The statement said that if necessary, Hongkong members of the drafting committee would authorise its six-member group to consult nominators if nominations exceeded the stipulated number and nominators failed to agree on suitable candidates.