

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Education and Publicity Sub-Committee

Paper 10/04

Sustainability Reporting Initiative

Purpose

This paper invites Members' views on the preparation of a sustainability report on behalf of the Council for Sustainable Development.

Considerations

2. At previous Education and Publicity Sub-committee (EPSC) meetings, Members have expressed an interest in developing a sustainability report for Hong Kong to measure how far the city has achieved sustainable development (SD) in terms of social, economic and environmental indicators. The Council for SD has expressed support in principle for such an initiative. At the last EPSC meeting on 19 Oct, Members agreed to arrange a separate "brainstorming" session on how to take this forward.

3. A number of Members met on 1 December and concluded that a sustainability report would be worthwhile in terms of promoting public awareness of SD, keeping track of Hong Kong's progress towards sustainability and serving as a benchmarking exercise. However, applications relating to sustainability reporting that have so far been submitted to the Sustainable Development Fund do not appear to serve the above purposes. In pursuing this initiative, Members agreed that the following issues needed to be considered.

Sustainability indices

4. Members considered whether SD indices applicable to the Hong Kong context should be formulated as basis for the compilation of a sustainability report. They noted that the Susdev21 Study completed in 2000 had formulated a set of indicators representative of key SD issues, and felt that these could be reviewed and updated as a basis for developing SD indices.

Approach to reporting

5. Members suggested that a sustainability report could cover either government departments or Hong Kong as a whole to measure progress in achieving SD. The former approach would only reflect the public sector's performance while the latter would offer a more comprehensive approach. Notwithstanding this, the report could be an annual exercise.

Guidelines for reporting

6. Members considered that the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), an internationally recognized and credible framework for organisations to report on their economic, social and environmental performance, could be used as a reference in compiling an SD report, although it was noted that there may be other tools available and that the GRI offers detailed guidelines that may not be totally applicable. Applicants who had submitted proposals relating to sustainability indices or reporting during the first and second round of applications to the SD Fund could be invited to give advice on how a sustainability report for Hong Kong could be developed.

Implementation Agent

7. Members advised that substantial resources in terms of

financial support and expertise would be required to implement the project, and suggested that this might need to be tendered out to suitable agent. A suitable source of funding would need to be identified.

8. Members agreed that the issues mentioned above should be further considered by the EPSC. However, a final decision on how the reporting should be implemented should rest with the full Council.

Further Action

9. Subject to Members' further advice, we will prepare a submission on this issue for the full Council's consideration.

Council Secretariat

December 2004