

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Report on the United Nations Asia-Pacific Leadership Forum: *“Sustainable Development for Cities”*

Purpose

This paper briefly reports on the United Nations Asia-Pacific Leadership Forum, “Sustainability for Cities” (UN Forum), held in Hong Kong on 25 and 26 February 2004.

The Forum - Overview

Objectives

2. The UN Forum was jointly convened by the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and hosted by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). It aimed to provide a platform for cities to exchange views on how to take forward commitments agreed at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and to discuss practical ways of achieving sustainable development goals, with particular emphasis on the development of sustainable infrastructure, economic opportunities and improving basic services in the cities of the Asia-Pacific region. The Forum also considered issues related to integrating sustainable development into city and regional planning. In line with the conclusions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the Forum also looked at how appropriate public-private partnerships could help to promote sustainability.

Participation

3. More than 380 participants from 21 countries attended the UN Forum. The delegates were mainly from Hong Kong, the Mainland and the Asia-Pacific region, with a few from North America and Europe. Nearly half of the delegates were from the public sector, about 20% from the private sector, 13% from non-government organisations, and the rest mostly from academic and quasi-government organisations.

The Forum - Programme

4. The UN Forum was a two-day event followed by side visits on the third day. It also featured an exhibition on the Hong Kong 2030 Planning and Vision Strategy and local nature conservation. A detailed programme is at the Annex for Members' reference.

Day 1

5. The Chief Executive of the HKSAR and the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. José Antonio Ocampo, addressed the opening of the Forum. Following this were keynote addresses focusing on the questions of “leadership for sustainable development” and “sustainable cities of the future” by senior level speakers from the Mainland, the UN, the United States, etc. The Chief Secretary for Administration of the HKSAR was also one of the keynote speakers at the Forum.

6. There was a panel discussion that provided a platform for municipal leaders, experts and city planners to comment on the keynote speeches, highlighting challenges as well as ways of incorporating sustainable development principles into city planning.

Day 2

7. Day 2 mainly comprised six parallel sessions that focused on the following areas: economic growth and job creation; infrastructure for a

better quality of life; planning for a better environment for urban housing and land use; meeting basic social needs; improving mobility; and tourism and cultural heritage.

8. At the concluding session, participants agreed on a “Hong Kong Declaration”. It provides a basis for future partnership with counterparts of other cities and is tentatively scheduled to be presented to the 12th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, due to be held in New York next month. Some key elements of the Declaration include -

- (a) Reaffirmation of the commitment to the goals, targets and recommendations contained in the Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;
- (b) Renewal of the commitment to achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers in the world, a Millennium Development Goal reaffirmed at the WSSD;
- (c) Redoubling the efforts of national, regional and local governments, civil society groups, business and other stakeholders to meet the mounting environmental, social and economic challenges arising from growing urbanisation;
- (d) Enhancing collaboration between cities, including capacity development initiatives, and encouraging the exchange of experience and lessons learned between cities of the Asia-Pacific region; and
- (e) By focusing on integrating sustainable development into city and regional planning and identifying new mechanisms for implementing sustainable development measures, a range of policy measures and actions have

been agreed to with respect to leadership and urban governance; economic growth and job creation; planning a better environment for urban housing and land use; meeting basic social needs; improving mobility; and tourism and cultural heritage.

Optional Side Visits

10. The optional side visits on the third day allowed delegates to see examples of Hong Kong's heritage and development. These visits, attended by a total of about 30 participants, were to Tai O on Lantau, the KCRC West Rail, and urban renewal sites in Wan Chai.

Way Forward

11. The UN Forum has provided a good foundation for establishing and maintaining links between cities in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond with the aim of developing sustainable approaches to further urban development. It has also provided us with helpful examples and information that we can consider when taking forward measures to promote and implement sustainable development in Hong Kong. We plan to build on these links with the Mainland and overseas counterparts and to continue to exchange views and experience with them, as appropriate.

12. A record of the full proceedings of the UN Forum will be prepared and distributed to participants and to Members of this Council in due course.

Council Secretariat
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