

## **COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Engagement Process on Population Policy**

#### **Purpose**

This paper invites Members to note the findings of the public engagement process on Population Policy, and endorse the Principles that capture the essence of the stakeholder views.

#### **Background**

2. The Council for Sustainable Development (SD), with the support of the Strategy Sub-committee (SSC) and Support Group on Population Policy, launched the engagement process on population policy with the issue of the Invitation and Response document “Enhancing the Population Potential for a Sustainable Future” on 29 June 2006.

3. During the four-month engagement until end October 2006, the Council had organised three regional forums<sup>1</sup>, five regional workshops<sup>2</sup>, and 15 events co-organised with partner organisations<sup>3</sup> to engage stakeholders from different sectors of the community in dynamic discussions on the population policy. In addition, the Convenor and members of the Support Group and its secretariat attended a number of meetings of individual organisations<sup>4</sup> upon their invitations, to brief them

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<sup>1</sup> The Council organised the Regional Forum (Hong Kong) on 29 June, the Regional Forum (Kowloon) on 22 July and the Regional Forum (New Territories) on 12 August.

<sup>2</sup> The regional workshops took place in Hong Kong (30 August), Kowloon East (3 October), Kowloon West (4 September), New Territories East (16 August) and New Territories West (13 September) regions.

<sup>3</sup> The Council’s partner organisations in this engagement process include Hong Kong Institute of Architects, Professional Green Building Council, Hong Kong Family Planning Association, Roundtable, Hong Kong Council of Social Service, Hong Kong People’s Council for Sustainable Development, Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups and Business Environment Council. The partner organisations assisted in organising the 15 events with the Council during August to October 2006.

<sup>4</sup> These organisations include the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Hong Kong Industries, Women’s Commission, Social Welfare Advisory Committee, Elderly Commission, etc.

on the engagement process and listen to their views on issues related to the population policy.

4. To promote the engagement process at the district level and also pave the way for future collaboration with District Councils in the implementation of future engagement processes, the SSC Chairman wrote to the District Council Chairs and Vice Chairs on 17 July. He also attended a Home Affairs Department's regular meeting with the District Council Chairs and Vice Chairs on 21 September, and briefed them on the progress of the engagement process.

5. Other promotional and engagement channels include the TV/radio Announcements of Public Interest, SD Strategy bulletins and the SD Strategy website with online discussion forum and questionnaire. The roving exhibition for this engagement process was held in 10 public locations<sup>5</sup> during July to October 2006.

6. In the past few months, we have distributed over 17,000 copies of the Council's IR document and more than 27,000 summary leaflets. By early November, the Secretariat has received over 2,200 responses to the IR document, which include written comments, leaflet responses, messages on online discussion forum, etc. Over 1,600 people attended the series of engagement events, and another 20,000 people visited the roving exhibition.<sup>6</sup>

### **Findings of the Engagement Process**

7. To provide an objective and independent analysis of the public views, we have engaged the Hong Kong Polytechnic University's Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) to provide an independent analysis and reporting service for this engagement process. The Draft Final Report on the stakeholder views as prepared by PPRI is at *Annex*.

Annex

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<sup>5</sup> The roving exhibition toured around the Festival Walk, Queensway Government Offices, MTR Hong Kong Station, Olympian City II, East Point City, Tuen Mun Town Plaza, Tsz Wan Shan Shopping Centre, Kingswood Ginza II, Sunshine City Plaza and Cityplaza.

<sup>6</sup> In the Council's first engagement process in 2004, we received around 1,900 responses, recorded around 1,400 attendances for engagement events and 22,000 attendances for the roving exhibition.

8. Taking into account the stakeholder views gathered at the engagement events, and their comments expressed through written submissions, leaflet responses, messages on online discussion forum, etc., we note that the stakeholders have expressed their major concern about the issues of quality of life, declining fertility rate, manpower and ageing population. The following proposed Principles have captured the essence of the stakeholder views on these issues gathered during the engagement process –

(I) Quality of Life

(1) Living environment

- (a) The Government and the community should join hands to improve the air quality, increase the provision of open space and recreational outlets, implement more greening measures and promote sustainable urban design, with a view to creating a better living environment.

(2) Working environment

- (b) To enhance our quality of life, the Government should actively work with the business community and NGOs to study ways to promote various family-friendly measures, such as flexi-time arrangements, job sharing and working from home.

(II) Declining fertility rate

- (c) To promote parenthood, the Government should implement measures conducive to childbearing and child rearing. However, it should not interfere with the childbearing decision of individual couples.
- (d) The Government should seek to reinforce the importance of family functions and promote family support, in order to enhance social harmony and build

a more sustainable social network of care and support for the population.

(III) Manpower

- (e) To maximize the potential of our local workforce and to better prepare them to face the challenges in the global market, the Government should enhance its efforts in training, retraining and continuing education of the local workforce to meet the manpower needs of the day.
- (f) The Government should continue to implement suitable schemes and keep them under review, with a view to admitting suitable talent to Hong Kong to enhance the competitiveness and vibrancy of society.

(IV) Ageing population

- (g) The Government should implement measures to promote healthy and active ageing, and to accommodate individuals' choices of their post-retirement life.
- (h) The Government should work with all relevant sectors to help meet the accessibility needs of an ageing population in a built environment.

**Way Forward**

9. We plan to organise the Strategy Summit of the engagement process later in the year, to invite stakeholders from all sectors to join a final round of discussion and build consensus on the way forward for a sustainable population policy for Hong Kong. Subject to Members' views, the above Principles will be put to the Summit as a basis for discussion.

10. Pursuant to the Strategy Summit, the Support Group will

help prepare a draft Council report on the engagement process, summarizing these Principles, as well as the associated targets and recommendations to be put forward for the Government's consideration. This draft report will then be considered by the SSC, and then submitted to the Council for deliberation and onward submission to the Government. Afterwards, the Government will take into consideration the Council's advice and publish a Strategy document on the population policy.

11. For this engagement process, a total of around \$2.6 million will have been spent during 2006-07 and 2007-08 financial years. Of this total amount, about \$1.45 million is financed by the SD Fund in this financial year and spent on printing the IR document, organizing engagement events and the independent reporting service. Around \$0.15 million of the SD Fund will be set aside in the next financial year for the printing and related arrangements for the Strategy document. The remaining \$1 million is financed by other sources of Government funding in this financial year and spent on publicity arrangements such as Announcements of Public Interest and roving exhibitions.

### **Views Sought**

12. Members are invited to note the PPRI's draft final report at *Annex* and endorse the suggested Principles set out in paragraph 8 above to be put to the Strategy Summit for stakeholders' discussion.

Council Secretariat  
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