

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Paper No. 07/03

Views collected from stakeholder groups on the Sustainable Development Strategy for Hong Kong

Purpose

This paper sets out views given by stakeholders in the context of the Planning Department's "Susdev 21" study, as well as in liaison meetings with staff of the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU), on issues related to the drawing up of a Sustainable Development (SD) strategy for Hong Kong.

Background

2. At the Council meeting on 1 April 2003, Members agreed that the SDU should prepare a brief paper summarising views that the Unit had gathered from stakeholders, in the course of regular liaison meetings and seminars, on the issue of formulating an SD strategy for Hong Kong. Given that the Planning Department's *Sustainable Development in Hong Kong for the 21st Century* study ("Susdev 21") also canvassed views from the public on issues related to sustainable development, this paper also sets out relevant feedback collected in the course of that study.

Susdev 21 Public Consultation

3. Although the focus of the Susdev 21 study was not on the formulation of an SD strategy, the Planning Department consultant did receive a number of opinions related to the overall sustainability of Hong Kong, in the context of stakeholder comment on the concept, scope and objectives of Hong Kong's sustainable development.

4. On the issue of defining the *concept* of sustainable development in the Hong Kong context, respondents considered that focus of “sustainable development” should be the improvement of our present and future quality of life. Stakeholders considered the issue of population size and profile to be a key factor in the sustainability debate. They submitted that the sustainability of Hong Kong hinged on its ability to control this population growth and that it was likely that a major increase in population size could not be accommodated without a significant impact. Some of those consulted also pointed out that to achieve sustainability for Hong Kong we must realise the full potential of our human resource capital.

5. In terms of *geographical context*, it was considered that Hong Kong could not achieve sustainability in isolation. This would be politically and geographically unrealistic given Hong Kong’s close relationship with the rest of the Pearl River Delta and the Mainland China. Many also felt that assuming global responsibilities and obligations with respect to the environment, trade and civil rights should be part of Hong Kong’s sustainable development. This view was balanced by those who considered that Hong Kong needed to develop its own system, taking account of its specific cultural, historical and environmental context.

6. Based on the results of the consultation exercise, the Susdev 21 team suggested eight key guiding principles for Hong Kong’s sustainable development (at **Annex A**). These have been incorporated in a computer tool that helps Government departments conduct sustainability assessments.

SDU’s Liaison Exercise since 2001

7. Since its establishment in April 2001, SDU has conducted regular liaison meetings with stakeholders to gather views on the work of the Unit and the general issue of Hong Kong’s sustainability. A list of these stakeholders is at **Annex B**. We have received regular feedback that Hong Kong needs an SD strategy that sets out a *long-term vision* for our further development that is based on the community’s aspirations and that does not compromise environmental sustainability and social progress. Stakeholders have further suggested that the strategy should include a set of

clear objectives and measurable indicators of the current state of Hong Kong's sustainability in various key areas, which would allow the community to track our progress towards the goal of sustainable development.

8. A number of groups and individuals have also commented on the establishment of *institutional mechanisms* for the pursuit of sustainable development (such as this Council). They have suggested that the SD strategy set out frameworks and institutions for integrated development and conservation, and ways to create regional and global alliances for sustainability. Many stakeholders have said that the SD strategy must have regard to the integration of Hong Kong with the Mainland, in particular the rest of the Pearl River Delta.

9. Several groups have expressed the view that in future sustainable development might help strengthen the integration of policy development on all matters with sustainability implications. The following were regularly cited as *priority areas* in terms of their impact on Hong Kong's sustainable development – (a) population policy; (b) energy policy; (c) Hong Kong's integration with neighbouring areas; (d) employment; (e) transport policy; and (f) education.

International Symposium on Sustainable Development

10. A facilitated workshop conducted in June 2002 as part of the International Symposium on Sustainable Development (IISD) organised by the SDU involved about 100 individuals, including members of various stakeholder groups, in an exercise to identify *ten priority issues* to be addressed in Hong Kong's pursuit of sustainability.

11. As the workshop did not discuss the overall vision for Hong Kong's sustainable development, there was no attempt made to define sustainability in the local context. However, the workshop process did result in the compilation of a list of priority areas to be addressed in taking forward Hong Kong's sustainable development. The ten priority areas defined by workshop participants are listed at **Annex A**.

Observations

12. The pursuit of sustainable development will inevitably be a subject of on-going debate and changing community aspirations. However, there are a number of common concerns and ideas that have emerged so far from consultation with stakeholders, and which we might expect to remain at the forefront of the debate on this issue.

13. For example, as regards the broad scope and vision for our future sustainability, we note that –

- (a) stakeholders generally consider that Hong Kong should not simply consider its own position in isolation from the Mainland, in particular the rest of the Pearl River Delta, when drawing up its detailed objectives for sustainable development
- (b) a number of those consulted take the view that Hong Kong should seek to contribute to overall global sustainability and look beyond the boundary of the city, and the wider region; and
- (c) some have further argued that, although we should examine sustainable development programmes or strategies from other administrations, Hong Kong should develop its own programmes and strategy having regard to local conditions and regional context, as well as international responsibilities and obligations.

14. As regard the various key objectives and priority areas, informed stakeholders distinguish between “sustainable development” and “environmental protection”. Therefore, the lists of guiding principles and priority items at **Annex A** do not just reflect “green” concerns. Rather, they reflect the need to integrate and balance between the three key areas of economic growth, social progress and environmental protection.

15. Among the lists of objectives and priority areas, there are some items that have consistently been cited as important by the groups and individuals consulted. These are: “population”, “conservation and biodiversity”, “social fabric and infrastructure” and “education”.

16. Other than these issues, stakeholders have often accorded weight to different areas depending on prevailing problems in society. For example, in 2001-02, the question of sustainable health and hygiene was rarely mentioned in our liaison meetings with stakeholders, and was not one of the priorities identified at the ISSD workshop. Yet in recent liaison meetings this has been cited as a key pillar of sustainable development for Hong Kong. The issue of “mobility” was considered one of the eight guiding principles by the Susdev 21 study, yet it was placed only 21st on the list of priority items drawn up by participants in the ISSD workshop.

Conclusion

17. As noted by the UNEP and the OCED in their guide to developing SD strategies, the formulation of a strategy is a “coordinated set of participatory and continuously improving processes”. In other words, this is not a “one-off” exercise, but rather a starting point putting Hong Kong on a sustainable path. Over time, we should expect there to be continued discussion, further stakeholder input and a process for reviewing, refining and revitalising the strategy.

Annex A**Guiding Principles from
Susdev 21 Study**

- + Economy
- + Health and Hygiene
- + Natural Resources
- + Society and Social Infrastructure
- + Biodiversity
- + Leisure and Cultural Vibrancy
- + Environmental Quality
- + Mobility

**Ten Top Priorities from
Symposium Workshop**

- + Education
- + Social Fabric / Civil Society
- + Integrated Planning
- + Corporate Social Responsibility
- + Civil Liberties and Human Rights
- + Integration with the Mainland
- + Conservation / Biodiversity
- + Economic Base / Competition
- + Green Economy
- + Sustainable Population Change

**Regular Liaison Meeting
List of Stakeholders SDU met since April 2001**

Advisory Boards / Committees

Advisory Council on the Environment
Energy Advisory Committee
Land and Building Advisory Committee
Social Welfare Advisory Committee
Town Planning Board

Academic / Research Institutes

Centre for Environmental Studies, CUHK
Centre of Urban Planning and Environmental Management, HKU
Department of Community Medicine & Unit for Behavioral Science, HKU
Hong Kong Institute of Asia Pacific Studies, CUHK
Institute for Environmental & Sustainable Development, HKUST
One Country Two Systems Research Institute

Environmental Protection / Conservancy organizations

Conservancy Association
Friends of the Earth
Green Peace
Green Power
Hong Kong Conservation Photography Foundation
Kadoorie Farm, Ecological Advisory Group
Society for Protection of Harbour
The Hong Kong Sustainable Development Forum
World Wide Fund Nature Hong Kong

Business Sector

Business Coalition on the Environment
Business Environment Council
Canadian Chamber of Commerce
Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce

Social Sector

Agency for Volunteer Service
Hong Kong Christian Service
Hong Kong Council of Social Service
Family Planning Association of Hong Kong
St James Settlement
Urban Watch
Young Women's Christian Association

Others / Professional Groups

Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
Breakfast Group
Chartered Institute of Housing (Hong Kong Branch)
Civic Exchange
Hong Kong Institute of Planners
Hong Kong Institute of Real Estate
Hong Kong Institute of Real Estate Administration