

**COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY SUB-COMMITTEE**

Paper 02/06

Engagement Process on Priority Area of Population Policy

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the working draft of the Invitation and Response (IR) document on Population Policy, as well as the implementation of public involvement events during the upcoming engagement process.

Background

2. In considering the way forward on the second engagement process at the last SSC meeting, Members discussed and exchanged views on the possible discussion scope of the Priority Area of Population Policy. In general, Members considered that more emphasis should be put on the sustainability aspects of the population issues involved –

- From an economic perspective : Recognizing that the population is the human capital of the society, public views on how our human capital may affect the ability of Hong Kong to maintain its competitiveness could be invited.
- From a social perspective : The relationship between the population and the social capital could be further explored. This may also concern the quality of life issue, the family re-union angle of immigration policies, and the social ties between the communities of Hong Kong and the Mainland.
- From an environmental perspective : Recognizing that the resources supporting the population are scarce, the public could be invited to take into consideration the capacity constraint for an ever-increasing population in discussing the relevant issues.

3. On the other hand, as noted at the last SSC meeting the Committee on Social Development and Quality of Life of the *Commission on Strategic Development* (the CSD Committee) will be discussing in 2006 the strategic issue of population policy. At its February meeting, the CSD Committee noted the current developments on the Council for Sustainable Development (SD)'s front, as well as the preliminary ideas on the discussion scope of the Priority Area of Population Policy (as summarized in paragraph 2 above). The relevant CSD Committee paper can be found at http://www.cpu.gov.hk/english/documents/csd/csd_sc_1_2006.pdf.

4. Subsequently, the CSD Committee discussed the issue of population policy at its workshop in late March. Members of that Committee will continue to discuss the issue at the upcoming meeting in April, when the working draft of the Council for SD's IR document will be made available to them such that they could contribute their views. The SDU will keep the Support Group on Population Policy informed of CSD Committee's views so that these will be taken account of in compilation of the IR document. This would help enhance the interface of work between the CSD and the Council for SD.

Work of the Support Group on Population Policy

5. Pursuant to the last SSC meeting, the Support Group on Population Policy has been set up under the chairmanship of Professor Wong Siu-lun. The composition of the Support Group is at Annex A. A number of meetings, workshops and brainstorming session have been held to define the discussion area and to prepare the IR document, having regard to SSC's preliminary ideas as set out in paragraph 2. Members may wish to consider and offer views on the working draft of the IR document at Annex B.

Public Involvement Events

6. Having regard to the experience last time round, as well as the views of the SSC and the Support Group, it is currently planned that the public involvement events for the upcoming engagement exercise will comprise –

- **forums** - to disseminate relevant information to the public to facilitate informed discussions;
- **workshops (or similar engagement events) to be organized by partner organizations** - to more effectively reach out to different sectors of the community (e.g. businesses, youth groups, professionals). Prospective partner organizations such as Business Environment Council, Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, Hong Kong People's Council for Sustainable Development, Hong Kong Council of Social Service, Hong Kong Federations of Youth Groups, Roundtable ^(Note), Family Planning Association of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Institute of Planners are being sounded out on their wish to participate in the engagement process as partner organizations. Their responses so far have been positive and forthcoming; and
- **regional workshops** - to directly engage the district communities during the process. This is to address the Council for SD's views after reviewing the first engagement process that a greater effort should be made to involve local communities in the second engagement process.

7. The public involvement stage of the engagement process on Population Policy will commence with the launch of the IR document at a dedicated **launching ceremony**, culminating with a **Strategy Summit** to summarize the views and findings of the process. It is the tentative plan to launch the IR document in May/June 2006, and the involvement events will take place throughout the summer until September/October 2006. During these months, there will also be **roving exhibitions** to help raise the awareness of the public of the issues at stake, as well as a **dedicated website and bulletins** to keep the public informed of the engagement process and to facilitate them to contribute their views. The SDU is

^(Note) Roundtable (Hong Kong Avant-Garde Policy Research Institute) was established in 2004 by a group of young people which aims at providing multiple-media channels for the youth to learn, discuss and express their ideas and viewpoints. It organizes regular seminars and academic conferences, produces online radio programs and publishes commentary articles to address various social issues from the youth perspectives. Members include young academics, professionals, journalists, district councillors, civil servants, etc.

making preparatory work for these activities.

8. Further to Members' earlier agreement to engaging an independent agency to prepare a **parallel report** on the outcome of the engagement process, the SDU is now in the process of assessing the proposal(s) received and will soon award the contract to the successful tenderer. The engaged agency will also be consulted during the preparation of the IR document, in particular the design of questions to be put to the public, so as to enhance the integrity of the process.

Financial Support for the Engagement Process

9. The estimated expenditure for the engagement process is being worked out. In connection with this, Members may wish to know that of the \$10 million annual allocation from the Sustainable Development Fund, the Council for SD has decided to set aside \$2 million for carrying out its own initiatives, including the public engagement process and the on-going publicity and community education programmes.

Views Sought

10. Subject to Members' views on the above issues, the SDU and the Support Group will follow up on the drafting of the IR document and the preparatory work for the public involvement events.

Council Secretariat
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