

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

Paper 03/03

**Key Steps in Formulating a Sustainable Development Strategy**

**Purpose**

This paper sets out the key elements for putting together a Sustainable Development (SD) Strategy for Hong Kong, taking account of the experience in other administrations and guidance provided by the United Nations and other international agencies.

**Proposal**

2. We **propose** that, as first steps for the Sub-committee to assist in the Council for Sustainable Development's work on a SD Strategy for Hong Kong, it should focus on the following key tasks –

- (a) Planning a consultation process that ensures that a wide range of interested parties throughout the community will be involved in drawing up the Strategy;
- (b) Subject to the Council's advice, formulating an appropriate structure for the Strategy, so that it can be both based on a long-term vision and at the same time set measurable targets and objectives; and
- (c) Working out a timetable that this Sub-committee can refer to in taking forward these and later steps in the strategy formulation process.

The SDU can help gather empirical data from appropriate sources that will help define the current situation in Hong Kong with regard to the policy areas likely to feature prominently in the Strategy.

## Considerations

3. At its meeting on 1 April 2003, the Council for Sustainable Development (the Council) tasked the Strategy Sub-committee to oversee the process of formulating a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong. The Council envisaged that the Sub-committee: “would organize and participate in, as necessary, workshops or other forums with stakeholders with a view to developing proposals for the full Council’s consideration”<sup>1</sup>.

4. At the same meeting, the Council considered a paper on formulation of an SD Strategy, and agreed to the proposals that -

- (a) Secretariat should prepare a report on the views that the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) has so far collected from various stakeholder groups with regard to the scope and possible agenda for considering a Strategy;
- (b) The Secretariat should also propose a timetable for completing consultation on and formulating the Strategy within a 12-18 month period; and
- (c) This Sub-committee should report regularly to the Council on progress with its work and submit views collected from various stakeholder forums to the Council with a view to mapping out the framework and detailed content of the strategy.<sup>2</sup>

5. Council Members also agreed that this Sub-committee should consider the report on stakeholder views and the proposed timetable first, before these were submitted to the full Council. Accordingly, the Secretariat will prepare a report on stakeholder views, as well as a working timetable, for Members’ consideration.

### *Experience of Other Administrations*

6. One of the key comments that the SDU has regularly received is that it is important to look at the international picture when drawing up an SD Strategy, even though the Strategy should be “localized” to fit Hong Kong’s own needs. In recent months, the SDU has reviewed a number of SD strategies from different

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<sup>1</sup> Council for SD Paper 01/03 “Terms of reference of the Council and Establishment of Sub-committees”, para.6

<sup>2</sup> Council paper 03/03 “Formulating a Sustainable development Strategy for Hong Kong”, para.2

administrations, as well as referring to resources that have recently been made available by the United Nations and other international agencies with a strong interest in SD. Steps that administrations might take in carrying forward the formulation of an SD Strategy are briefly summarized at **Annex A**<sup>3</sup>.

7. With the experience of other administrations in mind, and with reference also to UN and other resource materials and guidelines, we propose that Members focus initially on the following key tasks in formulating an SD Strategy for Hong Kong.

#### *Information Gathering*

8. Several of the SD Strategies that we have studied from other administrations include a range of empirical data that show the current state of society in the context of the major areas covered by the strategies. Typically, this might include data on economic trends, health, educational opportunities, energy and water consumption and matters related to conservation. The advantage of including this data is that it provides a basis against which the community may gauge progress and set future targets that can provide clear, unbiased indications as to progress towards greater sustainability. We consider that gathering such information at an early stage and making it available will help to contribute to better-informed debate on the issues that need to be tackled when considering Hong Kong's sustainability. Ultimately, appropriate data could be included in the strategy itself, to create "benchmarks" against which future progress can be monitored. Subject to members' views, the SDU can undertake the coordinating role and gather the empirical data from appropriate sources.

#### *Planning the Consultation Process*

9. As noted in the summary at Annex A, planning a consultation process is an important part of developing an SD Strategy, not least in that it helps to ensure that the strategy can better reflect the needs and priorities of concerned members of society, making it more likely to gain wider levels of community acceptance. In the Hong Kong context, it will be important to ensure that we make maximum use of the resources already available in the NGO sector as well as through government-sponsored consultation channels, such as District Councils. Given the wide knowledge gap in the community on issues related to SD, we need to be careful to design a process that will allow for inclusivity at the "neighbourhood" level, while also encouraging more advanced debate among

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<sup>3</sup> Drawn from the UN Development Programme and the OECD's joint publication "Sustainable Development Strategies" published by Earthscan UK and USA, 2002

groups that already have a grasp of some of the major issues that might affect the long-term sustainability of Hong Kong. In this regard, a “two-paced” consultation strategy might be appropriate, in which we consult the wider community and the “advanced” concerned groups in parallel.

#### *Devising an Appropriate Structure*

10. The various SD strategies that the SDU has reviewed do not tend to adopt any single uniform structure. However, it is noticeable that some of the more detailed documents do have a recognizable format based on an initial statement of a strategic vision, followed by objectives that are specific to certain relevant policy areas. These objectives are complemented by targets and indicators that help to paint a more detailed picture of the direction that the strategy prescribes, and which also enhance the transparency and accountability of the strategy-making process. Based on the review work done by the SDU to date, as well as guidelines set out in the UNDP and OECD resource book, **Annex B** sets out a notional framework for how a SD Strategy might look.

#### *Working Out a Timetable*

11. As noted above, the Council has tasked this Sub-committee with working out an initial timetable for the formulation of an SD Strategy, with a guiding time-line of 12 to 18 months. Taking account of Members’ views on the issues discussed above, the Secretariat will draft a working timetable for consideration by Members of this Sub-committee before putting this to the full Council.

#### **Further Action**

12. Subject to Members’ views, the SDU will begin to collect data from appropriate sources that will enable this Sub-committee to build up an early picture of where Hong Kong currently “stands” with regard to issues related to core sustainability concerns. We shall also prepare more detailed papers on the key issues identified above, particularly with regard to planning the first phase of the consultation process. We shall also draw up a draft timetable for taking the whole exercise forward, and prepare a brief report to the full Council on this Sub-committee’s initial thinking.

Council Secretariat

April 2003

## Annex A

### *Developing a Sustainable Development Strategy*

#### *Establishing Institutional Arrangements*

- 1) Establish a **secretariat** or coordinating body with sufficient authority and resources to facilitate the strategy development process

**DONE** (Establishment of SDU on 1 April 2001)

- 2) Set up a **steering committee** or other stakeholder forum with a balance of representation from government, private sector and civil society

**DONE** (Establishment of Council for SD on 27 February 2003)

- 3) Ensure **political commitment** from the highest levels (as well as other levels) to the strategy preparation and implementation

**DONE** (Approach endorsed by Council for SD chaired by CS on 1 April 2003)

- 4) Confirm a **mandate** for the strategy

**DONE** (Council tasked to advise on the formulation of the strategy with the assistance of the Strategy Sub-committee on 1 April 2003)

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#### *Planning the Consultation Process*

- 5) Identify the **stakeholders** that will help prepare and implement the strategy, and define their specific roles

- 6) Ensure broad-based **ownership** by government, private sector and civil society

- 7) Mobilise the necessary **resources**, and allocate in an accountable manner the required skills, management and financial support

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*Managing the Consultation Process*

- 8) Map out the **strategy process**, with reference to: related existing strategies, visions and goals, existing mechanisms and processes, areas of achievement and inconsistency in existing processes, areas for improving linkages and coordination
- 9) Develop **coordination** between various existing strategy frameworks
- 10) Establish **ground rules** for the strategy development process, on issues such as how decisions will be made and agreed and how to deal with conflicts of opinion
- 11) Set out a **timetable** for the process, in respect of the activities and the resources that need to be applied

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*Composing the Strategy*

- 12) **Promote** the strategy as a unified concept, possibly by publishing an initial 'prospectus' of the strategy process
- 13) Establish **mechanisms** for regular analysis, debate, planning, monitoring and review to ensure that stakeholders are best able to play their parts. These may include –
- Regular stakeholder forums and other means for participation
  - Appropriate communication and information systems
  - Decision-making arrangements
  - Monitoring and accountability processes.

## Notional Format for a Draft Sustainable Development Strategy or “Local Agenda 21”

Taking as reference the priorities agreed at the June 2002 International Symposium Workshop, models from other jurisdictions, the key elements of the UN Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg World Summit Plan of Implementation, and guidance from the UNDP and OECD strategy resource book, a Local Agenda 21 might have the following elements –

1. **A Strategic Vision :** This would set out the broad long-term goals of a society in the form of one or more statements concerning the core aim of providing a sustainable social and economic conditions for citizens while ensuring the a high quality of the natural living environment.
2. **Strategic Objectives :** This section would be broken down into a number of “theme” areas based on the priorities identified and agreed. A preliminary discussion at the International Symposium identified the following as priorities for Hong Kong –
  - *Education and Employment :* equality of opportunities for development that recognises social diversity
  - *Social Fabric and Civil Society :* developing civil society through cross-sectoral partnership and cooperation
  - *Integrated Planning :* improving consultative, structural and approval processes to meet sustainable goals
  - *Conservation and Biodiversity :* greater commitment to promoting cost-effective, “green” energy systems.
3. **Targets :** A time-scale (typically 15 – 30 years) would be set for achieving certain targets in respect of the strategic objectives, and these would be negotiated with relevant stakeholders so as to ensure common ownership and goals. Within the overall framework, milestones or shorter-term targets could be set, and appropriate measuring mechanisms should be agreed upon with stakeholders.
4. **Action Plans :** With regard to the various themes, specific action plans could be laid down in the form of commitments to tackle certain key areas of concern, whether through the drafting of laws or administrative guidelines, or the allocation of resources to particular areas.

5. **The Wider Context** : There could be a specific chapter on achieving sustainability with a concerted effort with the neighbouring region or cities. The Council for Sustainable Development has indicated that the strategy should be formulated also in the context of the Pearl River Delta region.