

# COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY SUB-COMMITTEE

Paper 03/06

## Update on the Second Engagement Process on Population Policy

### Purpose

This paper reports the latest updates of the Council for Sustainable Development (SD)'s second engagement process on population policy.

### Engagement Process

2. The Invitation and Response (IR) document entitled "Enhancing Population Potential for a Sustainable Future" was launched in late June 2006. Since then, a series of engagement events have been implemented to involve the community in a dialogue on the options for a sustainable population policy for Hong Kong. So far, we have organised three regional forums, five regional workshops as well as around ten engagement events co-organised with partner organisations<sup>1</sup>. Additional promotional and engagement channels include APIs, roving exhibitions<sup>2</sup>, SD Strategy bulletins, and the SD Strategy website with online discussion forum and questionnaire.

3. By late September, we have received around 1,000 stakeholder responses to the IR document, which include written comments, leaflet responses and messages on the online discussion forum, etc. In addition, the series of engagement events attracted over 900 attendances from a wide sector of the community in the past three

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1 The Council for SD's partner organisations for the second 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.

2 The roving exhibition has toured around the Festival Walk, Queensway Government Offices, MTR Hong Kong Station, Olympian City II, East Point City, Tuen Mun Town Plaza and Tsz Wan Shan Shopping Centre. In October, it will continue its tour in Kingswood Ginza II, Sunshine City Plaza and Cityplaza.

months.

4. Before the end of the engagement period in late October, there will be around five additional engagement events to be co-organised with the partner organisations. An SD Strategy Summit is being planned for November, which will be a finale event to consolidate the stakeholder views gathered in the engagement process.

### **Preliminary Observations**

5. Though the engagement period is still open till the end of October 2006, some preliminary observations on the community views are set out below –

- (a) Stakeholders generally agree on the need to promote work-life balance among our population, and hence help enhance the quality of life and probably the fertility rate in Hong Kong.
- (b) There are concerns on the declining fertility rate, which is affected by a wide range of factors. On one hand, the general economic prosperity of the city, and the availability of convenient and affordable childcare assistance may encourage individual couples' parenthood decisions. On the other hand, couples will also consider their own working culture and pressure, as well as the future development opportunities for the children before making such decision.
- (c) There is wide support for family-friendly working environment and the need to promote family values among our younger generations. Civic education may help change people's mindset to the proper values of family and hence also their family planning.
- (d) The elderly is the asset for individual corporations as well as the society as a whole. There is a need to consider innovative means to sustain the contribution of the elderly, for example by retaining them as mentors at reduced salary.

There are also concerns on the retirement protection for our elderly, especially those seniors who have joined the MPF for only a small number of years before retirement, as well as the housewives and those within the lower income group who may have limited retirement protection.

- (e) Stakeholders find it important to nurture as well as attract talent for our economy. There is also a need to address the current skills mismatch in the employment market.

6. The above is clearly not an exhaustive list of issues raised by stakeholders in the engagement process, but meant to be an indication of the general public opinions on the wide range of issues covered in the population policy.

7. On Members' earlier advice, we have engaged the Hong Kong Polytechnic University's Public Policy Research Institute to provide an independent analysis and reporting services for the Council's second engagement process on population policy. The Institute will also present its interim findings to Members at this meeting.

### **Views Sought**

8. Members are invited to note the latest updates on the second engagement process and the interim findings to be presented by the Public Policy Research Institute. Members are also invited to consider the recommendations to be put forward by the Council for SD to the Government on the way forward for a sustainable population policy for Hong Kong.

Council Secretariat  
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