

## **Summary Report on the Youth Forum**

### **“ Sustainable Development – Making Choices for Our Future”**

#### **The Forum**

The Youth Forum, jointly convened by the Council for Sustainable Development and The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups – Leadership 21, was held on 5 December 2004 (Sunday) at the Graduate House, The University of Hong Kong. The forum aimed to provide a platform for young people to share their views on sustainable development, in particular with reference to the three Pilot Areas of Solid Waste Management, Renewable Energy and Urban Living Space covered in the Council for Sustainable Development’s “Invitation and Response” (IR) document. The detailed programme for the forum is at [Annex A](#).

#### **Participants**

2. The forum had over 300 participants, comprising mainly senior secondary school students, university students and recent graduates.

#### **Welcome Remarks**

3. The forum opened with welcome remarks by Dr. Rosanna Wong, Executive Director of The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups and Dr. Edgar Cheng, Vice-chair of the Council for Sustainable Development.

#### **Presentations on “Sustainable and Non-sustainable Ways of Life”**

4. Following the welcome remarks, Mr. Tai Hay Lap, Member of the Council for Sustainable Development (CSD) and Mr. Frederick Lai, Member of the Education and Publicity Sub-committee of the CSD spoke about the principles and practice of sustainable development. Some of the main points of the presentations were as follows -

#### ***Tai Hay Lap***

➤ To achieve sustainability, we need to live in harmony with the natural

environment and cooperate with other societies in the world.

- Seven steps that can help us achieve this goal are -
  - full integration of the need for social and economic development with conservation of the natural environment;
  - recognising that sustainable development (SD) is a civil right and responsibility and the need to participate and to cooperate with one another;
  - caring about the rights of future generations;
  - respecting cultural, social, economic and ecological diversity;
  - pursuing a better quality of life, with strong regard for justice and equality;
  - understanding the world's changes and development in relation to sustainability; and
  - learning to react to changes in an unstable and unpredictable society.
  
- We have to work towards sustainability ourselves, and not just rely on others to do it for us.

*Frederick Lai (presentation materials attached at [Annex B](#))*

- The earth, which is owned by every living thing, can be compared to a bank account from which we draw water, air, knowledge, shelter, etc.; and into which we deposit time, concern, care and protection.
- Our consumption patterns may cause environmental pollution, wastage of natural resources and danger to our health. We need to give up unethical consumption patterns and pursue practices that are environmentally sound, e.g., using second-hand goods and natural products.
- We should also look to reduce consumption as far as possible.
- Adopting the “precautionary principle” in relation to consumption, by making the full use of materials and products, and reusing and recycling whenever possible, is a sustainable approach.

### **Creative Workshop on Sustainable and Non-sustainable Ways of Life**

5. The participants, guided by animators from the HKFYG explored their perceptions of SD through the means of an interactive workshop that

involved role-play, composition and thematic presentations.

### **Remarks on the Engagement Process for a Sustainable Development Strategy**

6. Mr. Donald Tsang, Chief Secretary for Administration and Chair of the Council for Sustainable Development gave remarks on the engagement process for a Sustainable Development Strategy. His speech (in Chinese only) is at [Annex C](#).

### **Presentations on “Sustainable Development Strategy and the Pilot Areas”**

7. Ms. Bonnie Yau and Miss Linda So, of the Support Groups on Solid Waste Management, Renewable Energy and Urban Living Space gave brief presentations on aspects of the three Pilot Areas and feedback so far received from the public. The main points of the presentations were as follows -

#### ***Solid Waste Management (SWM)***

- Key concerns were -
  - current landfills can only last another 7 to 11 years;
  - waste disposal is causing increased pressure on public finances; and
  - we are wasting valuable resources by dumping them into landfills.
- There are three possible scenarios for managing solid waste, namely: “Do Nothing” Response (minimum action); “Incremental” Response (piecemeal action); and “Progressive” Response (comprehensive action).
- Public feedback so far indicates support for:
  - a “4-tier” waste management strategy to reduce pressure on landfills by: reducing waste at source, recovering and recycling material, reducing waste volumes using advanced technology and disposing of waste at landfills only as a last resort;
  - mandatory producer responsibility schemes;
  - charges for waste management on a “user pays” basis as a way of encouraging waste reduction; and
  - creating a better market environment for the recovery and recycling industry.

### ***Renewal Energy (RE)***

- Some of the main concerns are -
  - there are only finite fossil fuel resources; and
  - there is an adverse impact on air quality and climate change from emissions from the use of fossil fuels.
- Possible options for Hong Kong are wind power, solar power and energy from waste.
- There are four possible scenarios to deal with the renewal energy issue, namely: “Business as Usual”, “Localised RE Facilities”, “Incremental Change” and “Ambitious Model”.
- Public feedback so far shows support for -
  - the development of RE facilities in Hong Kong;
  - the power companies playing a role in developing RE; and
  - energy conservation being promoted as part of the Sustainable Development Strategy.

### ***Urban Living Space (ULS)***

- The main concerns are high levels of congestion and poor urban design.
- There are three areas for consideration, namely: further development of the New Territories, urban redevelopment and rehabilitation and sustainable urban design.
- Public feedback so far indicates that -
  - there should be mixed types of development in the New Territories, as well as improvements to infrastructure and facilities and preservation of rural characteristics
  - for revitalization and redevelopment in urban areas, due regard should be given to the wider district context. Depending on the condition of the built environment, revitalization is a preferred option; and
  - for sustainable urban planning, there are concerns with regard to building heights, harbourfront development, integration of renewable energy and energy saving devices and greening of built up areas.

## **Group Discussions on the Pilot Areas and Sustainability “Top Ten”**

8. The participants were divided into small groups to share their views on sustainable development, in particular with reference to the three Pilot Areas. Each participant was also asked to suggest three priority areas for Hong Kong’s sustainability, with the ten priorities that received the highest votes being seen to represent those that were of prime importance to the participants.

9. Feedback from participants on the Pilot Areas is summarized as follows -

### ***Solid Waste Management***

- Waste should be separated and recycled for use.
- Education on waste management is important and we should learn from overseas examples.
- The government should learn from overseas experience and should make available resources for research in advanced technology to deal with the waste problem.
- The government should provide funding to waste collectors and NGOs, etc. to help collect and recycle the waste.
- The “user pays” principle should be applied to the commercial sector first and then later to individual households.
- It is the responsibility of businesses to manage the waste they create. If they fail to do so, legislation should be introduced for control.
- Selling or exchanging garbage for goods should be promoted.

### ***Renewable Energy***

- For a green urban city, several measures are proposed to deal with the energy problem -
  - solar energy panels to be installed on building rooftops;
  - central collection of waste and methane to generate energy;
  - the building of wind energy facilities, with solar energy panels in between the wind turbines;
  - promoting the use of water power to generate pollution-free energy; and
  - co-operating with the Mainland to generate RE.

- Wind energy could be developed on the Yuen Long Plain.
- Hong Kong has the potential to generate wave energy. Generators could be constructed along the coasts.
- Used oil could be collected to generate energy.
- Penalty charges could be levied if electricity above a set limit is used.

### *Urban Living Space*

- Space in between buildings should be increased.
- For good urban design, there should be low-rise development along the waterfront and higher buildings inland. Development in the vicinity of conservation areas, e.g., Mai Po should be low-rise in form.
- In renewing old urban areas, disruption to local communities, particularly in districts where there are many old people, should be kept to the minimum. Cultural features and characteristics should be preserved as far as possible and rehabilitation be adopted for buildings worthy of preservation.
- In urban renewal, new elements could be injected to change the character of an area, e.g., Langham Place in Mong Kok. Apart from Government, local community groups should also take part in the renewal process.
- To improve the living environment, the Government should provide incentives such as subsidies, or make it mandatory to provide balconies and sky gardens in buildings.
- New town development should be further pursued.
- The problem of community provision is not one of quantity but of location. Open space, for example, could be provided above ground, within or on top of commercial developments, or underneath footbridges.
- To increase usable space, underground development could be considered.

10. The Sustainability “Top Ten” in order of importance as voted by participants is as follows:

- Waste recovery
- A good education system
- Building up civil awareness
- Renewable energy
- Urban planning
- Improvement of air quality
- Ecological protection

- Urban living space
- Solar energy
- Recycling

### **Closing Remarks**

11. Mrs. Mei Ng, Director of the Friends of the Earth (HK) gave the closing remarks. She first responded to the “Sustainability Top Ten” and suggested ways to help young people understand more about sustainability and to participate in the discussion of issues that would affect our daily lives. She spoke on global concerns on SD and SD on the Mainland, and encouraged the participants to reflect on issues relating to sustainability in everyday life.

### **Feedback on the Forum**

12. The majority of participants considered SD to be a topic that concerned everyday life, and the forum had helped to increase their awareness and understanding of SD. In particular, the group discussion and interactive workshop allowed them to understand and share views on issues relating to sustainability in greater detail. They found the forum speeches and presentations enlightening and informative, particularly the concluding remarks by Mrs. Mei Ng, which gave participants pointers for reflection.

13. The participants would like to have had a series of workshops before the forum to prepare them with more information on the subject matter before engaging in group discussion. They considered that better results could be achieved if there were smaller groups and if more time had been allocated for the discussions. Participants would like to exchange views with Government officials and Council Members directly. It would also be beneficial if the forum report could be uploaded on the web for public reference.