

LAND AND BUILDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Information Note on Work Progress of the Sustainable Development Unit

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the work progress of the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU).

Work progress

2. With the funding approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (LegCo) in March 2001, the SDU was established under the Administration Wing of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office effective from April 2001. The priority tasks of the SDU include -

- (a) To ensure the integration of sustainable development principles into the Government's new major policy initiatives and programmes by instituting a sustainability assessment system;
- (b) To maintain the momentum of community discussion and education programmes on sustainable development in Hong Kong; and
- (c) To provide support to the Council for Sustainable Development upon its inception.

Sustainability Assessment System

3. To facilitate the integration of sustainability principles into the Government decision-making process, we have put in place a new sustainability assessment system since December 2001. Under the system,

all Bureaux and Departments are required to conduct a sustainability assessment of each of their new strategic initiatives or programmes which, as a general guideline, will likely bring about noticeable or persistent implications to our economic, social and/or environmental conditions on a territory wide basis. With effect from April 2002, Bureaux' and Departments' submissions to the Executive Council (ExCo) and the Chief Secretary's Committee or Policy Groups (CSC) should also include the sustainability assessment findings or results of their proposals. The SDU provides technical assistance and support to Bureaux and Departments to facilitate their proper application of the sustainability assessment system. It also helps the ExCo and the CSC to interpret the assessment findings as set out in Bureaux' and Departments' submissions.

4. To pave the way for the smooth implementation of the sustainability assessment system, the SDU has arranged special briefings and, with the assistance of the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI), organized series of training courses to equip Bureaux and Departments with the knowledge and skills to conduct the required sustainability assessments. We would also encourage prospective users to make use of the sustainability assessment system to identify cross-sectoral issues and scope out the sensitive areas for joint departmental examination at an early stage. In the past 12 months, some 300 and 470 colleagues attended the briefings and the training courses respectively. The training courses will continue in the second half of 2002 to reach out to more colleagues.

Council for Sustainable Development

5. Upon the establishment of the Council for Sustainable Development, the SDU will serve as the secretary and provide other secretarial support to the Council. The Council is to provide expert advice to the Government, keep the public regularly informed about its work and encourage the community to put the concept of sustainable development into practice. Moreover, we also plan to set up a Sustainable Development Fund in support of initiatives to promote sustainable development in the community, and seek the Council's advice on its disbursement.

Awareness Raising

6. The Government's efforts alone cannot build a sustainable society. The SDU has been establishing contacts with non-government organizations, green groups, academic institutions, the private sector and leading organizations, both locally and overseas, with a view to building strong partnerships in pursuing sustainable development. In addition, the SDU has launched a full programme to promote public awareness of sustainable development. In early 2002, we have published a pamphlet on sustainable development for distribution to all schools and a wide range of community organizations. We have also, in collaboration with some non-governmental organizations, brought the message of sustainability to the wider community through roving exhibitions and presentations at public fora.

7. More recently, the SDU hosted an international symposium on "Sustainability and the City" together with the Hong Kong Council of Social Services and the Business Coalition on the Environment on 10 and 11 June 2002. The symposium brought together a number of local experts, and others from overseas, the Mainland and Macao to share experience and discuss key sustainability issues for Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta region. Some 450 people from business groups, green groups, community organizations, universities, Bureaux and Departments took part in this event.

Sustainable Development Unit
Administration Wing
Chief Secretary for Administration's Office
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