

**Commission on Strategic Development
Committee on Social Development and Quality of Life**

Strategic Issues to be Discussed

Purpose

This paper invites Members to note the priority strategic issues to be discussed at future meetings of this Committee.

Background

2. At the first meeting of this Committee held on 1 December 2005, Members considered Paper Ref: CSD/SC/2/2005 on “Strategic Issues that may be Discussed at Future Meetings”. In concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that the Secretariat would consider Members’ views carefully and prepare a list of priority issues that should be tackled by this Committee.

Priority Strategic Issues to be Discussed at Future Meetings

3. Having carefully considered Members’ views, we have drawn up the following strategic issues, in descending order of priority, for discussion at future meetings -

- (a) tripartite partnership
- (b) population policy*
- (c) support for the family
- (d) income inequality and social mobility

4. In arriving at the above list, we have taken into consideration the tenure of this Committee and made reference to the agreed schedule of meetings (vide Paper Ref: CSD/SC/3/2005 on “Schedule of Future Meetings”). We have not proposed a longer list as this Committee will have

* A note setting out the population policy related work done by the Government and the Council for Sustainable Development is at [Annex](#).

only eight to nine more formal meetings from now till the end of its term, and that it may take more than one meeting to discuss an issue and hopefully provide some broad direction on the way forward.

Advice Sought

5. Members are invited to note the list of strategic issues for this Committee's discussion as set out in paragraph 3 above.

Secretariat to the Commission on Strategic Development
February 2006

Population Policy Related Work Done by the Government and the Council for Sustainable Development

Task Force on Population Policy

Following an announcement by the Chief Executive in July 2002, the Government set up a Task Force on Population Policy (the Task Force). Members include representatives of the relevant Government bureaux and departments. The Task Force published a report in 2003 containing 33 recommendations to address the challenges facing Hong Kong arising from its demographic trends and characteristics. The recommendations are related to the One Way Permit Scheme, training and other needs of new arrivals, education and manpower policy, admission of Mainland professionals and talents, investment immigrants, policies impacting on childbirth, elderly policy, growing transient population and eligibility for and portability of public benefits. Except for one recommendation which is in progress, all the recommended policy initiatives in the Task Force report have been implemented or are on-going measures.

2. Following up on the recommendations of the Task Force's report on eligibility and portability of public benefits and arising from concerns about the problems of ageing and low fertility, the Central Policy Unit (CPU) has subsequently commissioned the following consultancy studies:

- (i) A Study on Policies and Practices of Selected Countries/Territories in respect of Eligibility and Portability of Public Benefits;
- (ii) A Study on Eligibility of Public Benefits;
- (iii) A Study on Portability of Public Benefits;
- (iv) A Study on Policies and Practices in Selected Countries in respect of Retirement Age and their Applicability to Hong Kong;
- (v) A Study on Policies and Practices in Selected Countries that Encourage Childbirth;
- (vi) A Comparative Study on Selected Cities in the Mainland in Attracting Professionals and Talents; and

- (vii) A Study on the Immigration Policies and Practices of Selected Countries in Attracting Talents, Professionals and Investors and Their Applicability to Hong Kong.

The CPU is presently consulting the relevant government bureaux and departments on the findings and recommendations of the consultancy studies.

Council for Sustainable Development

3. Separately, the Council for Sustainable Development (SD) is considering a public engagement process on population policy. The Council for SD was established in March 2003 to advise the Government on matters related to Hong Kong's long-term sustainability. The Council for SD includes members with expertise and experience in the environmental, social and business sectors, as well as senior government officials.

4. The Council for SD implemented the first engagement process to directly engage the community in an active discussion on the sustainability issues in Hong Kong, with a specific focus on three pilot areas namely, solid waste management, renewable energy and urban living space. Building on the recommendations of the Council for SD, the Government formulated and published its First SD Strategy for Hong Kong in May 2005.

5. The public engagement process is a stakeholder-led process, with the Government, business and civil sectors as equal partners in reviewing the issues and identifying the sustainable way forward. A number of forums, workshops and summits are organised to invite community views on the issues.

6. The Council for SD organised a stakeholder forum in July 2005, to invite public views on priority areas to be addressed in the second engagement process for the SD Strategy. The stakeholders indicated their priority concern about, among others, the population policy and related issues. The Council for SD has therefore decided to take forward the Priority Area of Population Policy in the second engagement process.

7. In considering the way forward on the second engagement process at a recent meeting in January 2006, the Strategy Sub-committee of the Council for SD came up with some *preliminary ideas* on the possible discussion scope of the Priority Area of Population Policy which, subject to refinement, would form the basis of the consultation document for the engagement process (with a specific title of "Invitation and Response document").

8. To advocate the sustainability notion in the exercise, Members of the Strategy Sub-committee considered at the above-mentioned meeting that they would be inclined to put an emphasis on the sustainability aspects of the issues involved, which include the economic, social and environmental perspectives -

- From the 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 the 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 the 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.

Way forward

9. A dedicated Support Group will be set up by the Council for SD to prepare the above-mentioned “Invitation and Response document” and to design and implement the actual engagement process. In consultation with the Strategy Sub-committee, the Support Group will further consider and work out the discussion scope of the Priority Area. The Council for SD plans to launch the “Invitation and Response document” for public engagement in the second quarter of 2006, to be followed by a series of engagement events to invite community views.

10. At the first meeting of the Committee on Social Development and Quality of Life of the Commission on Strategic Development (the Committee) on 1 December 2005, Members expressed interest in the strategic issue of “population policy”. As the Commission on Strategic Development is the Government’s most important advisory body providing advice from a macro perspective during the early stage of policy formulation, Members of the Committee may wish to offer views and input on the broad direction and scope of the Council’s public engagement process on Population Policy. Subject to Members’ views, the Secretariat may organize a discussion

workshop for the Committee before the next Committee meeting scheduled for 24 April 2006 and/or include this issue in the agenda for the next meeting. The Government can prepare a paper on population policy to facilitate discussion by the Committee. The Support Group under the Council for SD will then further discuss the direction and scope of the topic in preparing the “Invitation and Response document”.

11. In Summer 2006, the Council for SD will engage the community in the discussion of the priority issues under the Population Policy. If Members of this Committee would like to further discuss this issue, a special forum could be arranged. After the series of public engagement events, the Council for SD will prepare a report on the engagement process to summarise the community views gathered and put forward its recommendations to the Government on the sustainable way forward. It is envisaged that the Council for SD’s report on the engagement process will be ready towards the end of 2006.