

## ***A CARING AND LIVABLE CITY FOR ALL***

### ***Submission for the First Meeting of the Committee on Social Development and Quality of Life of the Commission on Strategic Development***

1. In order to provide a coherent framework for discussion, we, as members of the Commission on Strategic Development, would like to propose the following strategic issues as priority items to be dealt with by the Committee on Social Development and Quality of Life.
2. Hong Kong is facing serious challenges: economic restructuring resulting from globalization; growing number of poor people; outbreaks of communicable diseases; dysfunctional land-use and town planning; and lack of reverses in air, water and marine pollution which threatens the quality of life of our citizens. An effective governance structure with full legitimacy is critical. A dysfunctional structure leads to poor governance and is a short cut to misfortune and poverty. It undermines social justice and disturbs social harmony. Transparency, accountability, and equity in public policy making are the keys to improving governance.
3. We recognize that reversing impoverization and marginalization of the poor, revitalizing deprived neighbourhoods, changing consumption and production patterns, managing natural resource base and protecting cultural heritage for sustainable economic and social development, are overarching objectives and essential requirements of Hong Kong's sustainable development. Only by tackling with these issues head on can we raise the quality of life for all sectors of the community, including in particular disadvantaged communities.
4. Hong Kong is ready to shift from "growth at all costs" to "quality growth only" – growth that improves the quality of life of all its community members. The pursuit for better quality of life can only succeed with the integration of social, environmental and

economic dimensions in sustainable development. Economic prosperity must not be confused with sheer emphasis on GDP growth, trade surplus, budget deficit reduction or efficiency drives in numbers. The obsolete, narrow-minded 'business-above-all-else logic' in our public policy making process must be rejected.

5. Inclusive, broad-based and informed public participatory processes are fundamental to sustainable development. Hong Kong people have said loud and clear that the traditional mode of consultation must give way to innovative mechanisms of participation, which allow all stakeholders' access to not only information, but also decision-making in public policies. This is of particular relevance to land-use and town planning, formulation of pro-poor policies as well as resource allocation for major infrastructure initiatives. Integrated sustainability impact assessments should be conducted to provide pointers for a thorough understanding of the socio-economic and environmental costs and benefits of various options, and thus facilitate the selection of courses of actions.

6. We recommend that, as a matter of priority, the following strategic issues be discussed under the framework of "A Caring and Livable City for All":

- *Given the deteriorating urban environment and increasing physical constraints (such as zero harbour reclamation), how can the physical and ecological 'limits to growth' be recognized, and cultural heritage be preserved, through changes in development pattern and planning controls, which are essential to tackling air pollution, noise pollution, transport, accessibility and public health concerns in city living?*
- *Given the growing income disparity and the imbalance between population settlement and employment opportunities, how can deprived neighbourhoods be re-vitalised and the quality of life of disadvantaged communities be improved through public and private investment, civil society initiatives as well as other policy instruments?*

- *Given the priority of conservation and the pressure of development in the countryside, how can depleted land and under-managed areas in the New Territories be restored and put into good use either for conservation or other economic functions in line with sustainable development principles?*

7. To ensure effective implementation of appropriate measures to tackle identified problems, the government has a duty to compile indicator-based reports to monitor Hong Kong's progress in implementing sustainable development strategies. The current CASET (computer-aided sustainability evaluation tool) is only a checklist for policy and project appraisal and is not useful at all in monitoring the city's efforts towards sustainable development. It is important to set up a credible institution and mechanism to monitor progress since only when problems are properly measured can they be properly managed.

8. As the terms of reference for this Committee included a mandate to "conduct research on major social development issues of strategic importance", we propose that research teams be set up under the leadership and steering of Committee Members. The Secretariat shall provide appropriate research personnel and resources to allow such research teams to focus on strategic issues deemed to be of priority for the Committee. Interested Committee Members may form Steering groups on a voluntary basis to take charge of different research tasks.

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#### **Members of Commission on Strategic Development:**

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