

5 July 2002

(By Fax To: 2524 3802)

Miss Becky Yu
Clerk to Panel on Environmental Affairs
Legislative Council Secretariat
3/F Citibank Tower
3 Garden Road
Hong Kong

Dear Miss Yu,

I write on the integration of the work of the Sustainable Development Unit with that of the environmental protection authorities, as referred by the then Secretary for the Environment and Food at the meeting of LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs on 29 October 2001.

The Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) set up under the Administration Wing is tasked to, inter alia, facilitate the integration of sustainable development principles into the Government new major policy initiatives and programmes by instituting a sustainability assessment system.

The new sustainability assessment system was put in place in 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, all submissions to the Executive Council (ExCo) and the Chief Secretary's Committee (CSC) should also include the Bureau's or Department's sustainability assessment findings or implications.

During the process, the Bureau or Department as the proponent has to assess the sustainability impacts of its proposal based on a set of prescribed indicators, which are categorized according to eight sustainability guiding principles covering, inter alia, natural resources, biodiversity, leisure and cultural

vibrancy, and environmental quality. The SDU provides technical assistance and support to Bureaux and Departments to facilitate their proactive and proper application of the system. The sustainability assessment should help the proponent to identify cross-sectoral issues and scope out sensitive areas for further actions. Where environmental or other specific issues are involved, or where there are differences in opinions between Departments, the proponent should seek clarifications and advice from relevant Bureaux and Departments (including but not limited to the environmental protection authorities) and carry out necessary joint examination, with a view to resolving the issues through a concerted effort at an early stage. The SDU would facilitate the process where necessary. That said, it remains the proponent's responsibility to present and justify its sustainability assessment to the ExCo and/or CSC.

In addition to the effective implementation of the sustainability assessment system, the SDU will also serve as the secretary and provide secretarial support to the Council for Sustainable Development upon its inception. In discharging its functions, the Council will work with other statutory boards and advisory committees such as the Advisory Council on the Environment to promote sustainable development in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,

(Miss Dora H M Fu)
for Director of Administration

c.c. Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Attn: Ms Jessie Wong)
Director of Environmental Protection (Attn: Mr Elvis Au)