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Dear Flora ,

LegCo Panel on Home Affairs
Meeting on 9 November 2001

At the captioned meeting of the Panel on Home Affairs, the Hon. CHAN Yuen-han, in discussing difficulties encountered by women in seeking employment, requested the Administration to elaborate on efforts to promote and facilitate women to participate more fully in the community. Our response is now set out below.

The Government is currently working in the following areas in promoting women participation in the labour market : -

- (a) employment services;
- (b) promoting job opportunities; and
- (c) vocational training and retraining programmes.

Employment services are provided to job-seekers through the Labour Department. For those who wish to increase their employability and upgrade their skills by engaging in vocational training and retraining, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and Employees Retraining Board (ERB) provide training in various areas. These services are open to all regardless of job-seekers/trainees' gender.

Employment services

Job-seekers of both sexes can register with the Employment Services Division of the Labour Department, which provides free employment services for them through its 11 job centres. The Job Matching Programme (JMP) serves to help job-seekers who have special needs, including women in seeking employment. One-stop career counseling, job matching services, and referrals to relevant training and retraining courses are provided through the Programme. Placement officers also provide in-depth services to job-seekers through telephone or face-to-face interviews.

Among the 15,522 registrants of the Programme in 2001, 61.1% were female. In 2001, the Employment Services Division of the Labour Department registered 180,852 job-seekers and 52.5% of them were women. During the same period, a total of 29,584 placements by referrals were secured and 56.2% of those placed were women.

Middle-aged women who are seeking employment may also join the Re-employment Pilot Programme for the Middle-aged. The Programme was launched in February 2001 to assist registrants of the LD who are unemployed for more than 3 months, and aged 40 or above, to secure a job. Eligible female job-seekers, like their male counterparts, are offered pre-employment training, induction training and follow-up counseling services through the programme. As at December 2001, a total of 9,810 job-seekers participated in the Programme and 60.4% were women. A total of 2,405 job-seekers were placed into employment, 63.0% were women.

Promoting job opportunities

The Government has stepped up measures to promote employment opportunities in sectors with potential growth. Two of the sectors identified are

domestic service and personal care service which have employed many female workers.

Local Domestic Helpers

Labour Department has set up special counters in its 11 job centres to provide employment services for local domestic helpers. At the Interactive Employment Services website of Labour Department, a dedicated webpage was set up for local domestic helpers to register and look up for job vacancies in a digital environment. To promote job opportunities for local domestic helpers, the ERB through its training bodies will provide one-stop service for employers and enhance training, carry out skills assessment, placement and post-placement services for job-seekers seeking domestic service jobs. It is anticipated that more job opportunities will be available to local domestic helpers through the implementation of the enhanced service.

Care workers

As a result of the increase in smaller families and the need for elderly care, it is anticipated that the demand for care workers will rise. The Government will step up measures to encourage homes for the aged to employ local care workers instead of importing care workers, so as to promote job opportunities for local workers seeking jobs in this field.

Vocational Training and Retraining Programmes for Women

Vocational Training Council

The Vocational Training Council (VTC), through its training centres and the Institute of Vocational Education (IVE) provide courses at craft, technician and higher technician levels in all disciplines. For IVE, 43% of the year 1 new students for the year 2001/02 were female. For courses in disciplines like applied science; business administration; child care; design, printing, textile and clothing; and hotel, service and tourism; more than 50% of new year-1 intakes were females.

As for the training centres of the VTC, 29 % of those enrolled in part-time courses in 2000/01 were females. Courses with female enrolment of

more than 50% include those in wholesale/retail and import/export trades; financial services development; hospitality industry training and development.

Employees Retraining Board

Over the past 2 years, the ERB provided about 79,000 training places a year, among which 74% were taken up by women. In terms of course mode, women enrolment represents 67% of the full-day places, 87% of the half-day places and 73% of the evening places. Popular courses with more than 75% who were female include:

- Job Search Skills Courses;
- General Skills Courses;
- Computer Courses;
- Language Courses;
- Clerical Courses; and
- Domestic Helper and Personal Care Worker Training Courses.

For graduates of placement-tied programmes in 2000-2001, the average placement rate of female graduates was 79% (with 19,030 placed out of a total of 24,088 female graduates).

Empowerment of Women – Priority Area of Action of Women’s Commission

Furthermore, I would like to add that the Women’s Commission which was set up in January 2001, has laid down as its mission “To enable women in Hong Kong to fully realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life”. Empowerment of women is one of the three priority areas of action identified. The Commission would seek to increase women’s self-reliance and internal strength so that they are better equipped to rise to life’s challenges and become agents of change, with a view to bringing about the realization of the full potentials of women. This will comprise capacity building for women and creation of an enabling environment for women’s participation.

The Commission believes that it could play a useful and unique role in empowering women in Hong Kong, which includes :-

- (a) playing a catalytic role in encouraging new thinking;
- (b) facilitating adoption of effective empowerment practices and new service models amongst relevant parties;
- (c) promulgating innovative and positive measures of empowerment to the community;
- (d) supporting relevant credible and useful research projects.

The Administration is in full support of the work of the Women's Commission. We are working with the Commission on a number of action areas, including encouraging and facilitating agencies to introduce capacity building initiatives in enhancing women's self-confidence, knowledge and skills. Action is also taken to compile effective empowerment practices of various groups and organizations with a view to promulgating them amongst women's groups and services agencies.

Empowerment of women is an on-going process. The Administration and the Women's Commission will seek to work in partnership with local organizations to bring about full participation of women in all aspects of life.

Thank you once again for Members' interest in this area.

Yours sincerely,

(Miss Mary Tsang)
for Secretary for Health and Welfare