

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Panel on Environmental Affairs

Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Role and Functions of the Council for Sustainable Development

Purpose

This note seeks to brief Members on the role and functions of the recently established Council for Sustainable Development (CSD).

Considerations

2. In his 1999 Policy Address, the Chief Executive first announced the establishment of a new Council for Sustainable Development to –

“provide expert advice to the Government and keep the public regularly informed about its work, so that we can build a better understanding of the concept of sustainable development. It will also encourage the community to put the concept of sustainable development into practice”.

3. In line with the recommendations of the United Nations (UN) “Earth Summit”, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the UN Agenda 21 that resulted from that Summit, many administrations around the world have

over the past decade established sustainable development councils. The status and role of these councils vary from place to place, but some of the more common functions of these councils include –

- (a) To facilitate the participation and cooperation of civil and economic society and governments for sustainable development;
- (b) To integrate social, economic and environmental perspectives; and
- (c) To look at the local implications of global agreements such as Agenda 21 and other international conventions related to sustainable development.

4. Typically, sustainable development councils are also involved in advising on the preparation of sustainable development strategies or Local Agenda 21 proposals.

The Council for Sustainable Development

5. The CE appointed the CSD on 1 March this year, under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary for Administration. A full membership list is at **Annex A**. At its first meeting in April, Council Members adopted the terms of reference at **Annex B**, in line with the CE's 1999 Policy Address and having regard to sustainable development councils in other administrations.

6. The CSD further decided that it would focus its efforts initially on two key areas under its terms of reference, namely : advising on the preparation of a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong that would integrate social, economic and environmental perspectives; and promoting public awareness and understanding of the principles of sustainable development in partnership with stakeholders. To help it achieve these ends, the Council agreed to establish two sub-committees, the Strategy Sub-committee and the Education & Publicity Sub-committee to take forward these tasks. Both sub-committees comprise Members of the CSD as well as “co-opted” members from outside the Council with appropriate expertise, knowledge and experience.

7. With regard to the overall approach to be adopted by the CSD, Members are unanimous that two key principles should be observed. The first is the principle of inclusivity, whereby the Council and its sub-committees would seek as far as practicable to involve a wide range of people and organisations from various sectors of the community in taking forward its agenda. The second principle is transparency, hence the arrangement to post the Council and Sub-committee agendas and papers on the website of the Sustainable Development Unit initially, pending further consideration to create a web-based resource centre of the CSD in due course.

Future Action

8. The CSD is already committed to advising on the preparation of

a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong, and the Strategy Sub-committee has begun work on the preliminary task of gathering information and working out a practical timetable for involving the public in formulating the strategy. Similarly, the Council has endorsed a proposal to establish a Sustainable Development Fund, which would provide resources that would allow organisations to conduct projects for promoting public understanding of the principles of sustainability and sustainable practices. Subject to the approval of the Finance Committee of this Council in establishing the Fund, the Education & Publicity Sub-committee will help scrutinize applications for grants and advise the Director of Administration on the disbursement of the Fund. The Sub-committee will also oversee other initiatives aimed at enhancing community awareness of the importance of sustainable development for Hong Kong's long-term future.

Sustainable Development Unit
Administration Wing
May 2003

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Membership List

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COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of the Council are –

- (a) To advise the Government on the priority areas it should address in promoting sustainable development;
- (b) To advise on the preparation of a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong that will integrate economic, social and environmental perspectives;
- (c) To facilitate community participation in the promotion of sustainable development in Hong Kong through various means, including the award of grants from the Sustainable Development Fund; and
- (d) To promote public awareness and understanding of the principles of sustainable development.