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WKCD-151
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9 May 2005

Miss Odelia LEUNG
Legislative Council Secretariat
3/F Citibank Tower
3 Garden Road
Hong Kong

Dear Miss LEUNG,

I refer to your letter of 26 April 2005. Our reply is as follows :

Response to WKCD-116

Museums

- There are over 20 museums in Hong Kong, only 12 of which are managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD).
- Upon establishment, the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) will be a very convenient venue in the downtown of Hong Kong. Therefore, we are not worried about the location of the arts and cultural facilities in the district.
- Even more remotely located museums can attract a lot of visitors if they are provided with good facilities and attractive exhibitions. The Hong Kong Heritage Museum at Sha Tin is a good example.

- The museum cluster of the WKCD will create economy of scale, clustering effect and enable sharing of administrative expenses. In fact, the clustering of museums are not uncommon overseas (e.g. the United States, Germany and Japan, etc.).
- The museums in the WKCD will operate in a mode different from that of the Government. All screened-in proponents have put forward their proposals on the development, operation and acquisition plans. The public are welcome to comment on the proposals.

Performance venues

- We agree that there is a need to provide more quality venues for performing arts groups.
- Under the current funding mechanism, various types of performing art groups in Hong Kong are supported by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (ADC) and the LCSD. The Committee on Performing Arts set up in 2004 has commenced to work on the betterment of the mechanism.

Visual Arts Academy

- The Hong Kong Baptist University will set up a Visual Arts Academy in September 2005. Meanwhile, the Hong Kong Arts Centre also takes a proactive approach to develop its visual arts courses.
- The Home Affairs Bureau is studying the feasibility of developing vacant factory buildings into new spaces for creative arts.

Conclusion

- According to the findings in consultations and studies conducted at various stages, the need for the core arts and cultural facilities in the WKCD is confirmed.

- We would like to gather more public views on the mode of governance for the arts and cultural facilities (such as the need to set up statutory institutions or trust funds, etc.).

Response to WKCD-123

- We agree that Hong Kong is seriously underprovided with performing arts venues. There is a need to increase the number of quality venues to meet the acute demand and attract various types of quality groups to give performance in Hong Kong.
- In the past few decades, it is clearly indicated that the availability of venues is crucial to the arts and cultural development in Hong Kong.
- We agree that the WKCD development will not only boost tourism, but also promote Hong Kong as an "information centre" where Chinese and Western cultures meet, enhancing Hong Kong's position as a bridge between China and the world as envisioned in the Culture and Heritage Commission (CHC) Policy Recommendation Report.

Response to WKCD-139

Government's Role

- As mentioned in Paper No. WKCD-110, the Government, as a facilitator to promote the development of culture and the arts in Hong Kong, has provided support to non-profit arts and cultural organizations and those organizations which could not be self-financing, in the form of venue subsidies, financial support, as well as opportunities for performance. For those arts and cultural activities which could operate independently, the Government also facilitates the work of private presenters through provision of venues.

- The CHC Report pointed out that because of historical reasons, most of the facilities and resources were operated by the Government. Nevertheless, Hong Kong has a remarkable cultural scene in terms of cultural diversity and artistic quality.
- We have been enhancing our role as facilitator in different aspects. For instance, the three performing companies and the International Film Festival previously managed by the LCSD have been corporatized. Furthermore, we provide support for Hong Kong Arts Centre and Theatre Ensemble to develop their "arts groups-in-residence" scheme. The LCSD will continue and further improve its "Programme Partnership Scheme" to allow more flexibility and space for arts and cultural organizations in order to further utilize and develop LCSD's venues.
- As for venue booking, the LCSD has adopted venue booking policy which ensures fair, open and transparent handling of applications from individuals and organizations. The policy is subject to continual improvements to meet the changing needs of the society.
- The Committee on Performing Arts is studying on how to implement the recommendations made by CHC in terms of funding policy and venue policy.

Culture and Heritage Commission

- As mentioned above, most of the cultural facilities and resources are now under direct management of the Government (mainly the LCSD), and there is a historical reason behind it. In fact, the two former Municipal Councils have made significant contributions to the cultural development of Hong Kong (both in term of hardware and software). Today Hong Kong can take pride in its arts and cultural development for its diversity and quality, thanks partly to the effort of the cultural services staff of the civil service over the years.

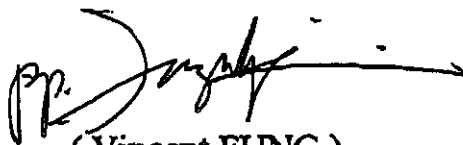
- In Paper WKCD-86 (Government's response to the CHC's Report), we have clearly stated our position relating to paragraphs 1.3 and 2.2 of the paper submitted by Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture.
- We have stated in Paper WKCD-130 that the three committees were set up in late 2004 to advise the Secretary for Home Affairs on implementation of the recommendations of the CHC on matters pertaining to performing arts, libraries and museums. They have commenced their work and started in-depth discussion on improvement of the current use of venues, resource allocation, and enhancement of the role and functions of the existing facilities.
- Besides, regarding the use of facilities, LCSD has presented to the Sub-committee data on the patronage of the cultural programmes, indicating that most of the cultural venues are used for organization of arts and cultural activities. To balance the needs of the cultural sector and the community in the use of performance venues, LCSD will give priority to hiring applications for activities relating to arts and cultural purposes.

West Kowloon Cultural District, Tourism and Museum Clusters

- Since 1996, the Government and the Hong Kong Tourist Association have conducted at different periods of time surveys on the use and development of arts and cultural venues, and has consulted the cultural, district and other sectors on the subject. For details, please see WKCD-110. The findings have affirmed that there is a shortage of performance venues.
- The LCSD submitted to the CHC in 2001 a 10-year development plan for museums in Hong Kong. Some of the proposals were adopted by the CHC. Please refer to WKCD-132 for details.

- In Paper WKCD-86 on the response to the CHC's Report, we have responded (in pages 20 and 21), inter alia, on the development of museums and improvement of services.

Yours sincerely,



(Vincent FUNG)

for Secretary for Home Affairs

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