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15 December 2004

The Honourable TUNG Chee-hwa
The Chief Executive of the
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
of the People's Republic of China
Chief Executive's Office
Hong Kong

**Setting up of a governmental inter-departmental committee
on aiding the poor**

On behalf of the Subcommittee to study the subject of combating poverty, I am writing to convey to you Members' strong request for the setting up of the governmental inter-departmental committee to aid the poor.

As you may be aware, the Legislative Council (LegCo) passed a motion on "Alleviating the disparity between the rich and the poor" at the Council meeting on 3 November 2004 urging, inter alia, the Government to set up a governmental inter-departmental committee on aiding the poor to comprehensively examine the disparity between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong. The wording of the carried motion is in the Appendix.

At the House Committee meeting on 12 November 2004, Members agreed that a subcommittee be formed under the House Committee to study the subject of combating poverty and to discuss with the governmental inter-departmental committee.

On behalf of the subcommittee, the LegCo Secretariat wrote on 17 November 2004 to invite the Administration to brief Members on the setting up of the governmental inter-departmental committee and the Administration's plan to combat the problem of poverty. In his reply dated 20 November 2004, the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food advised that he had reflected to you the strong wish of Members for the Government to set up an inter-departmental

committee to aid the poor. A copy of the correspondence is attached for your easy reference.

At the meeting of the subcommittee on 9 December 2004, members expressed grave dissatisfaction that the Administration had not yet responded to Members' strong request for setting up the governmental inter-departmental committee. The subcommittee strongly urged that the Administration should set up the governmental inter-departmental committee as soon as possible, and the committee should be headed by the Chief Secretary for Administration, so as to enable effective coordination of the various policies and initiatives to combat poverty. The subcommittee also requested that the governmental committee, when set up, should discuss with the subcommittee the work plan to combat poverty.

The subcommittee looks forward to your favourable reply.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Frederick FUNG Kin-kee)
Chairman
Subcommittee to study
the subject of combating poverty

Encl.

Appendix

**Wording of the motion passed
at the Council meeting on 3 November 2004
on “Alleviating the disparity between the rich and the poor”**

“That, as the Hong Kong economy has entered an inflation period, yet the unemployment rate remains high, with wages not showing an evident rebound and the disparity between the rich and the poor becoming more serious, this Council urges the Government to set up a governmental interdepartmental committee on aiding the poor to comprehensively examine the disparity between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong, so as to enhance the self-help capability of the socially disadvantaged groups and enable a more effective allocation of social resources, thereby helping those who are most in need and safeguarding the basic needs of the grass-roots people; at the same time, the Government should co-ordinate the efforts of various departments in formulating corresponding policies as well as measures to help get rid of poverty, with a view to narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor, reducing social conflicts and promoting harmonious social development.”