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Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty

Follow-up to suggestions on the work plan of the Subcommittee

Purpose

This paper seeks the Subcommittee's views on the suggestions made by deputations and members at the meeting on 23 February 2005 concerning the work plan of the Subcommittee.

Background

2. The Legislative Council Secretariat provided a paper on "Proposed study areas and work plan" [LC Paper No. CB(2) 583/04-05(01)] for consideration by the Subcommittee at its meetings on 14 January and 23 February 2005.

3. At these meetings, the following topics were proposed by members –

- (a) working poverty;
- (b) setting up of trust fund(s) to assist those in need by the commercial sector; and
- (c) review of the taxation system.

The updated list of "Possible study areas/discussion topics" is in the **Appendix**.

4. At the meeting on 23 February 2005, some members and deputations also gave suggestions on the work plan of the Subcommittee. These suggestions are detailed in paragraphs 5 and 6 below for the Subcommittee's consideration.

Suggestions made at the meeting on 23 February 2005

5. While expressing support for the work plan of the Subcommittee, some deputations attending the meeting on 23 February 2005 made the following suggestions –

- (a) The Hong Kong Council of Social Service suggested that the Subcommittee should consider setting up working groups to conduct in-depth discussion and public hearings on specific topics, and to provide recommendations to the Administration;
- (b) The Hong Kong Social Workers Association suggested that the Subcommittee should collect, on a regular basis, data relating to poverty in Hong Kong, to enable the Subcommittee to follow up the relevant issues;
- (c) The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong suggested that the Subcommittee should encourage academic institutions to conduct longitudinal studies on the problem of poverty; and
- (d) The Hong Kong Social Security Society suggested that the Subcommittee should monitor the work of the Commission on Poverty.

6. Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG suggested that the Subcommittee should consider conducting the following visits to obtain first-hand information on the problem of poverty –

- (e) visits to districts which had the greatest problems of poverty; and
- (f) visits to overseas countries which had taken effective measures to combat the problem of poverty.

Ways to take forward deputations' suggestions

7. In the paper on the "Proposed study areas and work plan" [LC Paper No. CB(2) 583/04-05(01)], it is proposed that –

- (a) the Subcommittee should discuss with the governmental inter-departmental committee, if set up, the problem of poverty and measures to tackle it;
- (b) representatives of the relevant bureaux and departments should be invited to the Subcommittee meetings to discuss specific topics;

- (c) relevant organizations, academia and concern groups should be invited to give views on specific topics after the Subcommittee has decided its study areas and priorities;
- (d) the Research and Library Services Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat will be requested to conduct research studies or provide information notes on specific topics to facilitate the Subcommittee's discussion; and
- (e) the Subcommittee will provide a report on each group of study areas after listening to the views of deputations and discussion with the Administration. The report will cover the views obtained, and the concerns and recommendations of the Subcommittee. The reports will be forwarded to the Administration for follow up.

8. Subject to members' views, most of the deputations' suggestions have already been included in the work plan of the Subcommittee. However, members may wish to consider whether working groups should be formed under the Subcommittee to study specific topics, and whether the Subcommittee should collect data on poverty on a regular basis.

Proposed visits to districts and overseas countries

9. If the Subcommittee agrees to conduct visits to districts and overseas countries (paragraph 6 refers), members may wish to consider the places to be visited and the timing for conducting the visits, having regard to the specific topics to be studied by the Subcommittee in the **Appendix**.

10. Members may wish to note that, as approved by The Legislative Council Commission, the allocation for each Member's Overseas Duty Visits Account (ODV Account) for the 2004-08 term is \$55,000. Members may wish to refer to LC Paper No. AS 176/04-05 for details.

Advice sought

11. Members are invited to give their views on paragraphs 8 and 9 above on how to take forward suggestions on the work plan of the Subcommittee.

Subcommittee to study the subject of combating poverty

Possible study areas/discussion topics

- (a) definitions of 'poverty' and different benchmarks adopted by various government departments in granting subsidies or financial assistance to the people in need;
- (b) the situation of poverty in Hong Kong;
- (c) impact of economic changes/policies on the problem of poverty;
- (d) labour and wages (employment opportunities, vocational training, employment support and re-training, minimum wage, etc.);
- (e) adequacy of the existing social security systems;
- * (f) working poverty;
- (g) assistance to the elderly (medical services, Old Age Allowance, transport subsidy, family and community support services, etc.);
- (h) assistance to children and youth (education and development, health, youth guidance, etc.);
- (i) assistance to women with low income and support to single parent families;
- (j) assistance to people with disabilities (employment opportunities, facilities for the disabled, transport subsidies, etc.);
- (k) policy on new immigrants (population policy, integration into community, etc.);
- (l) partnership with the business sector and non-government organisations;
- * (m) setting up of trust fund(s) to assist those in need by the commercial sector;
- (n) community efforts; and
- * (o) review of the taxation system.

(* *New items proposed for inclusion in the list at the Subcommittee's meeting on 23 February 2005.*)