

For information

**Panel on Security of the Legislative Council**  
**Trafficking in Persons for Sexual Exploitation**

**Background**

After considering the initial report of the People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong and Macao), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations has, in its Concluding Observations, expressed concerns about reports of the high incidence of trafficking in persons, especially women and children into HKSAR, mainly for the purpose of sexual exploitation. We are requested by the Panel on Security to provide information on whether the Government is aware of such problem and the basis of the Committee's concerns; and if so, a quantitative analysis of the extent of the problem.

**Human Trafficking**

2. As a convenient and busy marine and aviation hub, coupled with a liberal visa regime, Hong Kong is more vulnerable to migrant trafficking activities. Some clandestine migrants may exploit Hong Kong as a stepping stone for illegal migration to other destinations but very few choose Hong Kong as their destination. Importantly, Hong Kong is not a place of origin for exporting illegal migrants.

3. Over the years, cases of trafficking detected in Hong Kong, under which victims are forced into prostitution or other forms of exploitative situations by coercion, deception or abusive actions of the traffickers, are rare. In particular, we are not aware of any incidence of trafficking of children into Hong Kong for sex exploitation.

4. Though the numbers of prostitutes arrested in recent years are rather significant, i.e. 11,218 in 2003, 10,092 in 2004 and 2,355 in 2005 (January to April), most of them (over 99%) were visitors. Debriefings

from them showed that they entered Hong Kong to practise prostitution of their own volition. Rarely had any force, inducement or coercion been used or reported. In 2003 and 2004, only two and three trafficking cases respectively were identified.

### **Enforcement Actions against Human Trafficking**

5. Under the policy directive of the Security Bureau, all the law enforcement departments take concerted and co-ordinated efforts to combat human trafficking. An inter-departmental Joint Investigation Team, established by the Organized Crime and Triad Bureau comprising representatives from the Police, the Immigration Department (ImmD) and the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED), is in place to co-ordinate law enforcement efforts in this area.

6. Despite that trafficking cases are rare, ImmD exercises full vigilance at our airport, land border and sea boundary to detect doubtful visitors and clandestine migrants. To further strengthen their work, ImmD has set up an Anti-Illegal Migration Agency to mount regular flight operations and interdiction exercises against clandestine migrants and their facilitators at the airport. To combat sea-borne trafficking activities, Terminal Patrol Teams of C&ED conduct round-the-clock patrols and surveillance operations in the area of Kwai Chung Container Terminals. Mobile X-ray Vehicle Scanning Systems and other specialised equipment are deployed to check suspected containers. The Police collect intelligence, investigate suspected organizers of human trafficking and conduct joint operations with other departments to combat human trafficking. The Police also regularly conduct anti-vice operations with a view to eradicating the prostitution rings.

7. Our law enforcement departments also co-operate and exchange intelligence with their overseas counterparts in fighting human trafficking. A recent example took place in February 2004. Acting on the tip-off from the Police, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency of Los Angeles successfully intercepted a container from Hong Kong in which clandestine migrants were being smuggled.

8. As preventive measures, our law enforcement departments maintain close liaison with the terminal operators and shipping companies to enhance their awareness of the problem. Immigration, customs and police officers also keep themselves updated on the latest trends of migrant trafficking through attendance in conferences and workshops organized in Hong Kong or overseas.

### **Hong Kong's Efforts Well Recognized**

9. Hong Kong's efforts in tackling trafficking in persons on all fronts including prevention, enforcement and protection of victims have been recognized in the annual Trafficking in Persons reports published by the US State Department since 2001. In the latest report released on 3 June 2005, Hong Kong remains in Tier 1, i.e. the top tier indicating that Hong Kong complies fully with the minimum standards for elimination of trafficking<sup>1</sup>. The report commends that the HKSAR Government "continued to implement strong anti-trafficking measures".

Security Bureau  
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<sup>1</sup> Hong Kong has been placed in Tier 1 since the report was first published in 2001 (i.e. for five times consecutively).