

Date of Meeting: 14 November 2005

*Members' suggestion: The Administration to consider the creation of a new commitment of \$200 million to deal with a possible outbreak of H5N1 influenza in humans*

The Administration has invested heavily in the public health hardware and software to strengthen our defence against avian influenza. We estimate that, in the past few years, the Government incurred or allocated capital and recurrent expenditures of over \$4.5 billion to enhance our preparedness against emerging infectious diseases including avian influenza. The expenditure covered a wide range of areas, including acquisition of personal protective and medical equipment, provision of facilities for preventing infectious disease, antiviral stockpiling and provision of resources for enhanced infectious disease control.

The Administration has already made considerable provisions to enhance Hong Kong's preparedness against an avian influenza outbreak. Furthermore, in the 2006/07 Estimates, we have set aside about \$54 million in the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau to meet various unbudgeted contingencies for combating possible influenza pandemic. There is an established mechanism to allow the Administration to seek Legislative Council's urgent support for additional funding requirement should such need arise. Hence, we do not find it necessary to set up a fund for the same purpose at the moment.