

(Translation)

Motion on
“Alleviating the disparity between the rich and the poor and
assisting the grassroots in facing up to economic adversities”
moved by Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee
at the Legislative Council meeting
of Wednesday, 3 December 2008

Motion as amended by Hon WONG Sing-chi and Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun

That, being struck by the financial tsunami, Hong Kong’s growth in Gross Domestic Product for the third quarter has slackened to 1.7%, the effects of the financial tsunami have gradually surfaced, the risk of the economy entering into recession has substantially increased, layoffs and pay cuts take place one after another, the unemployment rate has rebounded but there is no notable downward adjustment in the prices of goods, causing people’s livelihood to become more difficult; moreover, a latest report of the United Nations points out that Hong Kong ranks first among all Asian cities in the disparity between the rich and the poor, with the Gini Coefficient which reflects the inequality of income distribution rising to a record high of 0.533, indicating that the disparity between the rich and the poor is increasingly serious, this Council therefore urges the Government to adopt the following measures to alleviate the problem of disparity between the rich and the poor:

- (a) the Government should create new positions at the middle and low ranking levels to absorb those groups which have a more serious employment problem, such as young people and middle-aged low-skilled workers, etc;
- (b) expanding the Transport Support Scheme to cover the 18 districts in the territory to benefit people with low income and job-seekers;
- (c) encouraging Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (‘CSSA’) recipients to increase their income through employment, and assisting low-income or unemployed CSSA recipients who are employable to engage in employment and upgrade their skills in order to help them leave the CSSA net;
- (d) allocating funds to set up district poverty funds, and formulating focused proposals to alleviate poverty having regard to the poverty situation in various districts; and
- (e) expeditiously implementing all the recommendations in the Report of the Commission on Poverty, and re-establishing the Commission on Poverty to explore and recommend focused measures to assist the grassroots in facing up to economic adversities and to formulate comprehensive and long-term policies to

effectively allocate community resources and narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, thereby protecting the basic livelihood of the grassroots and promoting harmonious social development;

- (f) focusing on the persistently high food prices, the Government should expeditiously implement short-term food assistance projects and study the further extension of their scope of implementation; and
- (g) taking into account the fact that the unemployed population in Hong Kong may increase substantially, the Government should take precautionary measures to organize more training courses in collaboration with local tertiary institutions or training bodies and subsidize the unemployed to pursue continuing education to help them add value to and transform themselves, so as to soothe their emotions and restore their confidence in the future.