

政府總部
香港下亞厘畢道



GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT
LOWER ALBERT ROAD
HONG KONG

本函檔號 OUR REF.: SRD 101/3/R VIII

來函檔號 YOUR REF.: CB(3)/PAC/CS(48, 49 & 49A)

23 January 2009

Clerk of Public Accounts Committee
(Attn.: Ms Serena CHU)
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Chu,

**Follow-up to Public Accounts Committee Report No. 31
Recoverability of the outstanding advances to the UNHCR**

I refer to your letter of 16 January 2009.

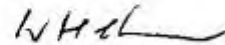
The Administration has been making every effort to recover the outstanding advances through various means. For example -

- (a) the Security Bureau wrote to the Head of the UNHCR Hong Kong Sub-Office in March 2006, February 2007, September 2007, March 2008 and August 2008 to urge UNHCR to make renewed efforts to appeal to the international community for donations to allow early repayment of the outstanding advances. In our letters, we also registered the Hong Kong community's expectation of an early recovery of the advances as well as the Legislative Council's concern on the matter;
- (b) four meetings were held in January 2007, September 2007, March 2008 and July 2008 between the representatives of the HKSARG and the UNHCR Hong Kong Sub-Office. The issue was raised at these meetings; and
- (c) the issue was also raised at a meeting between the HKSARG and the UNHCR headquarters in November 2008.

The UNHCR has repeatedly conveyed the message that since they have to handle increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers globally, it is not optimistic that repayment can be made in the foreseeable future. On the other hand, the UNHCR has not withdrawn its commitment to repay such advances. It remains our understanding that UNHCR's reimbursement to Hong Kong would be subject to availability of funds.

The Administration's assessment is that it is not optimistic that full recovery of the amount due, or partial recovery could be achieved in the near future. This said, the Administration will continue with our efforts to urge the UNHCR to repay the advances.

Yours sincerely,



(W H CHOW)
for Secretary for Security