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Panel on Home Affairs

**Background brief prepared by Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 5 February 2010**

Government policy on youth development

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the government policy and initiatives on youth development, and summarizes views and concerns of Legislative Council (LegCo) Members on the subject.

Policy on youth development

2. The Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) is responsible for promoting the work on youth development at community level in partnership with the Commission on Youth (COY) with a view to achieving the following policy objectives –

- (a) promoting positive values among young people;
- (b) enhancing their understanding of Chinese culture and heritage;
- (c) encouraging their participation in voluntary and community work;
- (d) broadening their international perspectives; and
- (e) promoting leadership training among them.

3. In his briefing to the Panel on HAB's policy initiatives in 2009-2010, the Secretary for Home Affairs (SHA) advised that the Administration would continue to work closely with COY in planning and implementing youth development projects in order to develop the full potential of young people, encourage youth organisations to actively participate in youth development work, promote positive core values among young people and instil a positive outlook on life, thus enhancing their whole person development and moral

development and making them become responsible good citizens. It would also strengthen its support to youth uniformed groups (UGs) which assisted in encouraging the youth and their families to uphold family values.

Major government initiatives on youth development

Role of Commission on Youth

4. COY is an advisory body set up by the Administration in February 1990 to advise the Chief Executive on matters pertaining to youth, and assist the Administration in formulating youth development plans and promoting relevant activities to help nurture vision, creativity, leadership and sense of responsibility among youths so that they can be leaders of Hong Kong in future. Members of COY, including unofficials and representatives from government departments, are appointed by SHA.

5. COY convenes regular meetings to deliberate on youth matters and makes recommendations to the Government. It also undertakes researches and studies on matters pertaining to youth, operates Community Participation Scheme for Organizing Study Tours to the Mainland, and organises the International Youth Exchange Programme to broaden young people's horizon and international perspectives.

Youth forums and summits

6. Since 2001, COY has been organising the annual Youth Summit and, as a prelude to the Youth Summit, a series of district youth summits for young people to have direct and interactive exchanges with Government officials and interested parties on selected topics. The last Youth Summit was held in 2006.

Members' views and concerns

7. At the meeting of the Panel on 20 October 2008, members enquired about the Administration's plan in reactivating the annual Youth Summit which had ceased since 2006. These members considered that the Summit provided good opportunities for exchange of views between young people and government officials, and enabled the Administration and public organisations to gauge the views of young people in a structured manner. They also pointed out that many young people and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in youth development matters had high expectations in participating in the Summit. Members raised similar concern at the Panel meeting on 19 October 2009 during the discussion on the government's policy initiatives on youth development.

8. In response, the Administration said that it would take into consideration members' views in its review on the future direction of the district youth summits and Youth Summit. It also assured members that the Youth Summit would be organised as and when appropriate.

9. During the debate on the Motion of Thanks at the Council meeting on 30 October 2009, a Member expressed concern about the long delay for COY in organising the annual Youth Summit, despite its Chairman's undertaking for holding one when appropriate. The Member said that many social workers were looking forward to the Summit so as to communicate with the Government over various issues and problems relating to young people, such as employment, unemployment, education, drug abuse, compensated dating and home ownership.

10. At the meeting on 30 October 2008, another Member expressed concern that no district or territory-wide Youth Summit had been held since 2006, and queried as to whether the Government was genuinely committed to encouraging more youth to participate in politics and express their views on social issues. The Member recalled COY's initiatives in setting up youth forum organising committees in the 18 districts for young people to hold district youth forums in their own districts to discuss various social policies, and arranging a territory-wide Youth Summit for young people to share and exchange views in 2004. He urged the Government to reactivate such a mechanism to encourage more young people to care for the society and their community.

11. According to the Administration's response to a Member's question on district youth forums at the Council meeting on 28 June 2006, during the district youth summits and Youth Summit held in 2004, young people had expressed interest in taking part in public affairs and called for the provision of additional channels of participation, such as the setting up of a youth forum to provide a direct and effective platform for their social participation and discussion on various issues relating to public affairs. The COY in principle endorsed the value of a youth forum and had since undertaken extensive research, consultation and preparatory work. In 2006, COY reaffirmed the development direction of the youth forum but considered that its formation, operation and relationship with COY should be further examined with a view to working out a better mode before trying it out in certain districts.

Youth uniformed groups

12. HAB has been providing recurrent subvention to youth UGs listed in **Appendix I** to allow them to provide non-formal education services to support the development of youth, with a view to promoting positive values among young people; enhancing their understanding of Chinese culture and heritage; encouraging their participation in voluntary and community work; broadening

their international perspectives; and promoting leadership training among them.
Members' views and concerns

13. At the Panel meeting on 19 October 2009, a member enquired about the mechanism for allocation of fund to youth UGs. He also expressed concern about the inadequate provision of office facilities for these groups and suggested that the Administration could convert vacant school premises for their use.

14. In response, the Administration affirmed the contribution of youth UGs in cultivating positive values among young people and steering them away from drugs through a variety of training programmes and activities. It also assured members that it would actively consider the allocation of more resources to these groups, including securing suitable venues for their operation as far as possible.

15. Regarding the funding mechanism, the Administration advised that the subvention level to individual UGs was determined with reference to the organisation's recognised expenditure in terms of staffing establishment, operating expenses, rent and rates. Since the handover of the subvention responsibility from the Social Welfare Department to HAB in 2000-2001, HAB had in general made across-the-board adjustments to the amount of subvention to youth UGs mainly according to the overall level of available resources. For example, there was a 5% increase in recurrent subvention to the UGs in 2008-2009. This apart, HAB also provided one-off funding according to the need of UGs; for example, for purchasing equipment and organising one-off projects such as training camps and visits to the Mainland as far as resources were available.

16. A member opined that apart from instilling discipline among young people, the development of their critical thinking was of equal importance. In response, the Administration advised that it had organised a variety of cultural programmes in tandem with activities provided by the UGs for the development of young people's creative and critical thinking.

Youth Square

17. The development of the Youth Square in Chai Wan (formerly known as the Hong Kong Centre for Youth Development), at an estimated capital cost of \$750.9 million with a total gross floor area of about 40 000 square meters, is one of the main initiatives taken by the Administration in promoting youth development. The Square, comprising a Main Block (15 levels above the basement auditorium) and a Hostel Block (12 storeys), has come into operation in 2009. A list of its facilities is in **Appendix II**. Issues relating to the development of the Square have been closely monitored by the Panel since the project was first proposed to LegCo in 1999. Background information detailing the development of the project and discussions held by LegCo

Members up to February 2009 is set out in LC Paper No. CB(2)580/08-09(05) and CB(2)818/08-09(06).

18. The Panel continued to follow up with the Administration on various issues concerning the development of the Youth Square on 9 January 2009 and 13 February 2009. A site visit to the venue was also arranged on 7 February 2009. During the above meetings, members noted from the Administration the following issues/developments in relation to the new structure -

- (a) the main purpose of the Youth Square, as stated in the relevant papers provided by the Administration to LegCo, was to serve as a focal point for territory-wide youth development activities in Hong Kong. It would also provide facilities and venues for promoting youth development and training, as well as the steer and support for NGOs involved in youth development work and youth groups;
- (b) the Government would directly take up the responsibility of managing and operating the Square by funding the necessary recurrent expenditure. HAB would strive to achieve full cost recovery by making every effort to operate the Square in a cost-effective manner;
- (c) HAB would engage a management and service contractor through open tenders for the day-to-day management and operation of the facilities in the Square; and
- (d) the Youth Square Management Advisory Committee (MAC) had been set up on 1 January 2009 with a view to advising the Government on the operation of the Square, including its overall strategy and objectives; the themes and contents of youth development programmes; the use, allocation, leasing and charging arrangements of various facilities; the proposed allocation and renting of premises. MAC would also evaluate the effectiveness of the use of the Square in promoting youth development programmes and monitor the performance of its service operator.

Members' views and concerns

19. Some members raised concern about the poor quality of the fitting-out works, for example, at the Auditorium of the Youth Square, and requested the Administration to monitor closely the defect rectification and improvement works. The Administration advised that despite the technical completion of the construction work, the contractor would endeavour to expedite the defect rectification works as required under the contract. In response to members' enquiry about the use of the multi-purpose areas at 5/F to 9/F of the Main

Block, the Administration advised that the purpose of the multi-purpose areas was to allow flexibility in the future allocation and design of these areas to cater for different youth development needs.

20. A member opined that the Administration should be vigilant about the future operation and management of the new facility, which would possibly become a focus of severe criticism in future, taking into account the unsatisfactory aspects including its long construction time, changes of management mode, defects in building works and delay in opening schedules, etc. Another member asked how the Administration would ensure the affordability of the rental charges for NGOs and whether consideration would be given to according priority to UGs in renting spaces at the Square as their offices and activity bases.

21. In reply, the Administration explained that to ensure effective use of public funds and avoid perpetual subsidy, the rental charges for venues and facilities at the Square would in principle be determined having regard to the operating costs and market values. However, consideration would be given to introducing rental concessions for youth groups. The MAC would advise on the leasing and charging policies of the facilities taking into account relevant considerations and public views on the operation of the Square.

22. On the composition of MAC, some members considered that it was of utmost importance for young people to participate in the Committee, and enquired whether youth representatives would be invited to sit on the Committee. A member suggested that more focus groups should be organised to solicit the views of young people on the use of the facility and programmes to be organised.

23. The Administration advised that HAB had appointed the Chairmen of COY and the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education, a representative nominated by the Eastern District Council, as well as persons from different sectors, such as youth, business, academia and arts, as members of the MAC. Most of the members had rich experience in youth development work through active participation in youth development activities or strong connection with youth groups. Regarding members' suggestion for members of the Committee to be invited to the Panel meeting in future to discuss issues relating to the Youth Square, the Administration said that the onus was with HAB to report back to LegCo Members for their monitoring of issues relating to the Square.

Motion on youth policy

24. Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che has given notice to move the following motion on "Formulating a comprehensive youth policy" at the Council meeting of 3 February 2010 -

"面對青少年失業率持續高企，社會流動的機會越來越少，跨代貧窮問題日趨嚴重，加上政府各政策局提供青少年服務的目標不清晰，尤其欠缺讓青少年參與社會發展的機會，本會促請政府立即透過各種渠道諮詢青少年的意見，制訂一套全面及前瞻性的青少年政策，統籌有關政策局及執行部門的工作，以整合現時青少年服務，切合他們的需要；另外，政府亦應提供一個讓青少年參與社會事務的平台，尊重及聆聽青少年的意見及需要，讓他們積極參與社會發展，確立自己的人生目標。"

(Translation)

"That, in the face of persistently high unemployment rate among the youth, shrinking opportunities for social mobility and the increasingly serious inter-generational poverty problem, coupled with the unclear objectives of the youth services provided by various government bureaux, in particular the lack of opportunity for the youth to participate in social development, this Council urges the Government to immediately consult the youth through various channels to formulate a comprehensive and forward-looking youth policy, and coordinate the work of the relevant bureaux and executive departments, so as to consolidate the existing youth services to meet their needs; in addition, the Government should provide a platform for the youth to participate in social affairs, respect and listen to the views and needs of the youth, so as to enable them to actively participate in social development and establish their goals in life."

Latest development

25. The Administration will brief members at the Panel meeting on 5 February 2010 on its latest initiatives in promoting youth development, including (a) measures to promote positive values among young people; (b) the work of COY and its position regarding the organisation of Youth Summit; (c) the operation of the Youth Square; and (d) the support for youth UGs.

Relevant papers

26. A list of relevant papers with their hyperlinks at the LegCo website is in **Appendix III**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
1 February 2010

Appendix I

Government subvented youth uniformed groups and non-governmental organisations providing non-formal education and training to young people

Scout Association of Hong Kong

Hong Kong Girl Guides Association

Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps

Hong Kong Sea Cadet Corps

Hong Kong Adventure Corps

Hong Kong Red Cross

Hong Kong St John Ambulance

The Boys' Brigade Hong Kong

The Girls' Brigade Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Road Safety Association

Hong Kong Award for Young People

Agency for Volunteer Service

Appendix II

Key facilities of the Youth Square

| | Floor | Major Facilities | Gross Floor Area (GFA)* / Capacity |
|--------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---|
| Main Block | Basement & G/F | Y-Theatre | 660 persons |
| | 1/F | Y-Platform | about 3,000 m ² |
| | 2/F | Y-Studio | about 400 persons |
| | G/F, 2M/F & 3/F | Retail areas | about 3,400 m ² |
| | 4/F | Cafeteria | about 2,500 m ² |
| | 6/F | Dance studio | about 380 m ² |
| | 5/F - 6/F | Multi-purpose areas | about 4,500 m ² |
| | 7/F - 9/F | Multi-function rooms/Offices | about 7,400 m ² |
| | 10/F - 12/F | Youth hostel | 54 rooms |
| Hostel Block | 1/F - 12/F | Youth hostel | 96 rooms |

* Including common areas and ancillary facilities

Panel on Home Affairs

Relevant documents on the government policy on youth development

| Committee | Date of Meeting | Minutes/Paper/ Council question | LC Paper No. |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| Council meeting | 28.6.2006 | Written question on district youth forums raised by Hon Martin LEE | http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/counmtg/hansard/cm0628-transtate-e.pdf (pages 8826) |
| Panel on Home Affairs | 20.10.2008 | Minutes of meeting | CB(2)425/08-09 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha20081020.pdf |
| Council meeting | 30.10.2008 | Official record of proceedings | http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/counmtg/hansard/cm1030-transtate-e.pdf (page 913) |
| Panel on Home Affairs | 9.1.2009 | The Administration's paper on the Hong Kong Centre for Youth Development | CB(2)580/08-09(04) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0109cb2-580-4-e.pdf |
| | | Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat on the Centre for Youth Development | CB(2)580/08-09(05) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0109cb2-580-5-e.pdf |
| | | Minutes of meeting | CB(2)1088/08-09 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha20090109.pdf |

| Committee | Date of Meeting | Minutes/Paper/ Council question | LC Paper No. |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--|--|
| Panel on Home Affairs | 13.2.2009 | The Administration's paper on the Hong Kong Centre for Youth Development | CB(2)778/08-09(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0213cb2-778-1-e.pdf |
| | | Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat on the Centre for Youth Development | CB(2)818/08-09(06) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0213cb2-818-6-e.pdf |
| | | Minutes of meeting | CB(2)1280/08-09 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha20090213.pdf |
| Panel on Home Affairs | 12.6.2009 | The Administration's paper on youth development through volunteer service | CB(2)1790/08-09(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0612cb2-1790-3-e.pdf |
| | | Fact sheet on youth development through volunteer services prepared by the Research and Library Services Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat | FS26/08-09 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/sec/library/0809fs26-e.pdf |
| | | Minutes of meeting | CB(2)2346/08-09 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha20090612.pdf |
| | | The Administration's follow-up paper on updates on youth development initiatives and information on youth development policy | CB(2)2462/08-09(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ha/papers/ha0612cb2-2462-1-e.pdf |

| Committee | Date of Meeting | Minutes/Paper/ Council question | LC Paper No. |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--|---|
| Panel on Home Affairs | 19.10.2009 | The Administration's paper on policy initiatives of the Home Affairs Bureau | CB(2)42/09-10(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ha/papers/ha1019cb2-42-1-e.pdf |
| | | Minutes of meeting | CB(2)578/09-10 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ha/minutes/ha20091019.pdf |
| | | The Administration's follow-up paper on the mechanism for funding allocation to youth uniformed groups | CB(2)319/09-10(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ha/papers/ha1019cb2-319-1-e.pdf |
| Council meeting | 30.10.2009 | Official record of proceedings | http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/counmtg/hansard/cm1030-translate-e.pdf (page 1110) |

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