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Panel on Welfare Services

**Proposed continuation of work of the
Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation in the 2009-2010 session**

Purpose

This paper invites members to endorse the proposal of the Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation to continue its work in the 2009-2010 session.

Background

2. The Subcommittee was appointed by the Panel on Welfare Services (the Panel) on 12 January 2009 to study policies and measures relating to poverty alleviation and to make recommendations where necessary. The Subcommittee will focus its work on the following areas –

- (a) following up on the implementation of the recommendations of the then Commission on Poverty;
- (b) following up on the recommendations of the former Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty; and
- (c) the support services and assistance for the needy, in particular the adequacy of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and the improvement measures to the elderly services to alleviate the problems faced by the disadvantaged.

Progress of work of the Subcommittee

3. Under the chairmanship of Hon Frederick FUNG, the Subcommittee has since February 2009 held seven meetings with the Administration and received views of deputations at two of these meetings. The Subcommittee has studied the following major issues –

- (a) review of the CSSA Scheme, including –
 - (i) the adequacy of CSSA payments;
 - (ii) the operation of the discretionary mechanism on residence requirements;
 - (iii) the provision of internet access charges under the CSSA Scheme; and
 - (iv) the disregarded earnings arrangements;
- (b) the improvement measures to residential care services for the elderly under the 2009-2010 Budget initiatives;
- (c) the progress of the development of social enterprises to assist the disadvantaged and unemployed; and
- (d) the definition of poverty and the use of poverty indicators.

4. In the course of deliberations, the Subcommittee has requested repeatedly the Administration to review the adequacy of the CSSA payments (such as the basic needs items of goods and services covered under the CSSA Scheme) and the residence requirement under the CSSA Scheme as well as to formulate a long-term plan for fostering the development of social enterprises.

5. The Subcommittee conducted a duty visit to Taiwan and the Republic of Korea from 19 to 25 July 2009 to study the experience of both places in the development of social enterprises and the formulation and implementation of anti-poverty strategies. The delegation submitted its report to the Panel and the House Committee (HC) in October 2009.

Need for continuation of work in the 2009-2010 session

6. Most of the issues highlighted in the preceding paragraphs, such as the review and the adequacy of the CSSA Scheme and the development of social enterprises, are issues which will have significant implications on the poverty alleviation work. There is a need for the Subcommittee to continue to monitor these issues.

7. Furthermore, at the Panel meeting on 9 November 2009 when the subject of definition of poverty was discussed, members expressed grave concern about the poverty situation in Hong Kong. Members were advised that a set of 24 multi-dimensional poverty indicators were adopted by the

Administration to measure and monitor the poverty situation in Hong Kong. Members took the view that the use of the poverty indicators to analyse the poverty situation and formulate and evaluate policies to assist the needy and disadvantaged should be further examined critically and monitored closely. In the light of the number of issues to be discussed by the Panel at each meeting, members agreed that the matter should be followed up by the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee has discussed the definition of poverty and the use of poverty indicators at its meeting on 30 November 2009. The Subcommittee will further discuss the policies and measures to alleviate poverty at district level in January 2010.

8. It is envisaged that the Subcommittee will need to continue to operate to undertake the tasks set out in paragraphs 6 and 7 above. The Subcommittee agreed at its meeting on 30 November 2009 that it should continue its work in the 2009-2010 session according to its existing terms of reference.

9. Members may wish to note that in accordance with House Rule 26(c), a subcommittee should complete its work within 12 months of its commencement and report to the relevant Panel. If it is necessary for a subcommittee to work beyond that 12 months, the subcommittee should, after obtaining the endorsement of the relevant Panel, report to HC and give justifications for an extension of the 12-month period.

Advice sought

10. Subject to the endorsement of the Panel on the continuation of the work of the Subcommittee in the 2009-2010 session, a report will be made to HC on the justifications for continuing the work of the Subcommittee beyond the 12-month period.