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**Report of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works
for submission to the Legislative Council**

Purpose

This report gives an account of the work of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works for the 1999-2000 session for tabling at the meeting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) on 21 June 2000 in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure of LegCo.

The Panel

2. The Panel was formed by resolution of the Council on 8 July 1998 for the purpose of monitoring and examining Government policies and issues of public concern relating to lands, buildings and planning matters, works and water supply, and Public Works Programme. The terms of reference of the Panel are at **Appendix I**.

3. The Panel comprises 11 members. Hon Edward HO Sing-tin and Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong were elected Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Panel respectively. The membership list of the Panel is at **Appendix II**.

Major work

Planning and development

4. In this legislative session, a number of major planning proposals were put to the Panel for consultation. The re-planning of West Kowloon Reclamation (WKR) was one of the items of great concern to the Panel. Members took note that the original outline zoning plan for WKR, prepared in the early nineties, would not be able to meet the social and economic needs of Hong Kong in the 21st century. Notwithstanding the re-planning of WKR would render part of the current works contract abortive, members accepted that for the long term benefits of Hong Kong, there was a need to re-plan WKR and turn it into a new art, culture and tourist centre. In this connection, the Panel welcomed the launching of an open competition for the development of

WKR to enable the private sector to put in innovative ideas to achieve the objectives of the re-planning exercise. Members however cautioned that given the limited time for preparation, the final products in the competition might not be compatible with the genuine needs of Hong Kong. Without linking the design with development rights, the financial viability of the facilities proposed would also be in question.

5. The Panel also deliberated on the development proposals for North East and North West New Territories following the completion of the planning and development studies on these areas. Members noted that it was Government's intention to develop Fanling North, Hung Shui Kiu and Kwu Tung North into a "riverside town", "gateway town" and "boundary town" respectively, taking into account the natural resources and the geographical features of the three areas. Members urged the Administration to give thoughts to eco-transport and to create employment opportunities in these new towns to minimize travelling between home and workplace.

6. Of equal concern to the Panel was the proposed development in Tung Chung and Tai Ho in North Lantau. Members considered it necessary to put in place the principle of sustainable development in new developments such as those in North Lantau. Tai Ho Bay, being a valuable waterbird habitat, should be preserved. Members welcomed the initiative of private developers in making an alternative proposal to highlight on the importance of environmental protection and ecology protection. For the development of Tai Ho, members noted the difference between the Government's original proposal and that proposed by private developers in terms of conceptual design and scale of reclamation, and suggested that the decision on the development in Tai Ho should only be made after thorough consideration of the individual merits.

7. The Panel also gave views on the revised scheme on South East Kowloon Development. Members welcomed the Preliminary Layout Plan which had taken into account the views expressed by the Panel and members of the public on the original proposal. Further reducing the scale of reclamation was supported. Members however called for an extension of the consultation period on the revised scheme and the provision of concrete measures to implement the concept of sustainable development.

8. Members were briefed on the findings of the Trunk Road option evaluation and the waterfront development proposals for Wan Chai Development Phase II. Having regard to the performance criteria in relation to reclamation, engineering, traffic, planning, environment and cost, members supported the option for a tunnel and flyover scheme along the existing shoreline. However, members had reservations about the associated conceptual land use proposals, in particular about the proposed construction of a large "island park" by reclaiming the Victoria Harbour and urged the Administration to rethink the proposals.

9. Together with the Panel on Environmental Affairs, the Panel held two meetings to discuss the preliminary findings of the Study on Sustainable Development for the 21st Century. Members gave suggestions to improve the scope and the depth of the proposed definition of sustainable development for Hong Kong and of the proposed indicators that would be used to assess the impact of major Government policy and initiatives on sustainability. Members also gave views on the approach in respect of the "Hong Kong 2030: Planning and Vision Strategy". Members stressed, amongst other things, the need to strengthen communication with the Mainland and to assess the impact of technological development in charting the long-term planning strategy.

Lands

10. The year-by-year land sale and development programme remained a concern of the Panel. Members welcomed the adoption of a combination of a regular land auction/tender programme and the land application system which was introduced in 1999. These measures had proved to be effective in providing flexibility in disposing land and in achieving the policy objective of maintaining steady land supply. Members however noticed that the actual land sold had fallen far short of the land offered for private housing in the 1999/2000 land sale programme, and called on the Administration to be watchful of the demand and supply situation of private housing.

11. Following the violent confrontation between the Police and the residents of Shek Wu San Tsuen during the clearance operation, the Panel reviewed the existing land resumption procedures. To enhance public understanding of the reasons for resuming a particular piece of land, members suggested the setting up of a formal mechanism to make available the relevant information for public inspection. The Panel also requested the Administration to review the ex-gratia zonal compensation system and to increase liaison with landowners concerned before taking steps to resume their land.

Buildings

12. The Panel held a joint meeting with the Housing Panel to explore the best ways to tackle the chronic problem of unauthorized building works. Notwithstanding the pledge of the Administration to step up enforcement and clearance actions, members were not optimistic that the problem could be resolved in the near future. Members urged the Task Force on Building Safety and Preventive Maintenance to expeditiously come up with comprehensive proposals to tackle the problem at root. The Administration was reminded that rehousing residents displaced by the clearance of unauthorized building works was a thorny issue which must be handled in a prudent way.

Drainage

13. The Panel continued to monitor the adequacy of flood control and prevention measures. Members were gravely concerned about the widespread flooding in North Western New Territories on 14 April 2000 after torrential rain. The Panel did not accept that the causes of the flooding were due entirely to the inadequate capacity of the existing drainage system and the low-lying features of the areas. Noting that the affected residents attributed the serious flooding to the construction works of the West Rail and had lodged claims with the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation for damages, the Panel requested the Administration to assist the parties concerned in establishing the causes of the flooding. Members also requested the compilation of a progress report on the improvement measures taken to prevent a recurrence of the problem.

Slope works

14. Ensuring slope safety had always been high on the agenda of the Panel. Members welcomed the completion of the task to identify the maintenance responsibility of all 54,000 man-made slopes in the territory and the release of the information to the public. Members took note that of the 54,000 man-made slopes, 37,000 were government slopes and had been assigned to seven government departments for maintenance. Comprehensive inspection of all government slopes would be completed in three years. Although the compliance rate of Dangerous Hillside Orders had been improving over the years, the Panel urged the Administration to explore the need for introducing a mandatory slope safety inspection scheme.

Legislative and financial proposals

15. The Panel was consulted on various financial proposals before their submission to the Finance Committee for consideration. The proposal to purchase a permanent office accommodation for the Beijing Office had been critically examined by members. Whilst members reckoned that the Beijing Office had to adequately meet Hong Kong's presentational and representational needs, they sought justifications for a quadrangle-style office and urged the strengthening of the work of the Beijing Office, in particular on the provision of assistance to Hong Kong residents detained in the Mainland.

16. The Panel gave views on the Urban Renewal Authority White Bill and the draft Land Titles Bill. Members noted the various amendments to the draft Land Titles Bill to address the concerns raised in the latest rounds of public consultation. The Panel also discussed the legislative proposals to introduce a charging and penalty system for road opening works. In view of members' doubt about the effectiveness of the proposed measures to expedite road excavation works and the objections raised by utility companies, the Administration decided to defer introducing the legislative proposals, pending

further discussion with utility undertakers.

17. During the period from October 1999 to June 2000, the Panel held a total of 16 meetings of which five were joint meetings with other Panels.

Legislative Council Secretariat

9 June 2000