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3 September 2004

Clerk to the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs
Legislative Council
8 Jackson Road
Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms Doris Chan)

Dear Ms Chan,

Follow-up to Panel Meeting on 11 June 2004

I refer to paragraphs 37, 38 and 43 of the minutes of meeting of the Panel on Home Affairs held on 11 June 2004. The Administration's response is set out below.

(a) The Hon Albert Ho (paragraph 37 of the minutes)

The Hon Albert Ho requested details of the litigation cases in which officers of disciplinary services were alleged to have assaulted persons arrested or detained and compensations had been issued to relevant parties. He also asked whether the Administration would examine these cases to see whether provision of the CAT had been violated. The Secretary for Security has responded as follows -

“Allegations of assault made by any person arrested or detained by officers of disciplinary services are subject to criminal investigation. If there is sufficient evidence to substantiate an allegation, the assailant will be liable to criminal prosecution. Under no circumstances will an allegation of assault be dealt with through civil litigation or resolved through compensation. As such, we cannot provide the information requested by the Hon Albert Ho.”

(b) The Hon Emily Lau (paragraph 38 of the minutes)

The Hon Emily Lau expressed concern about the increase in the number of children on CSSA. The Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food has responded as follows -

“Statistics showed that the number of CSSA recipients aged below 15 increased from 19,612 as at end-1993 to 118,864 as at end-2003. The percentage share of recipients aged below 15 among all CSSA recipients increased from 16.2% to 22.8% over the same period. The increase in the number of CSSA recipients aged below 15 could be attributed to an increase in family cases involving mostly adult recipients, as well as children under 15. In fact, the number of CSSA recipients aged 15 - 59 (who are mainly able-bodied recipients) increased from 30,992 as at end-1993 to 224,339 as at end-2003. Its share among all CSSA recipients increased from 25.6% to 42.9% over the same period. The total number of CSSA recipients has also increased from 121,060 as at end-1993 to 522,456 as at end-2003 (Please see the attached table for details). The change in the number of CSSA recipients aged under 15 showed no significant departure from the trend of increase in the number of able-bodied recipients or the total number of CSSA recipients.”

(c) The Hon Cyd Ho (paragraph 43 of the minutes)

The Hon Cyd Ho said that it was necessary for the Administration to devise a scientific method in collaboration with NGOs concerned for calculating the number of non-CSSA children who were actually living below the poverty line and formulate a policy to assist the families concerned. The Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food has responded as follows -

“Regarding Members’ proposal of adopting scientific calculations to work out the number of children living in poverty, we consider that such calculations will inevitably involve subjective value judgement. At present, there are no universally agreed definitions or measurements of poverty; there will also be difficulty in factoring the various forms of intangible income

(e.g. subsidised housing, education, health care and welfare services) into the formula. As a matter of fact, the absence of a poverty line has not affected whatsoever our support for the needy. Indeed, the Government has all along attached great importance to the well being of our children. On top of a social security safety net, families in need are provided with a wide range of support services in terms of education, housing, medical care, etc. Needy families not receiving CSSA can also apply for other assistance, such as child care fee assistance, student travel subsidy, school textbook assistance, school fee remission and medical fee waiver. Furthermore, our family services, operated along the “child-centred, family-focused and community-based” principle, also play a significant role in addressing the psychosocial needs of children and families. The Government will adhere to its current policy and continue its efforts in providing appropriate support for needy children and families.”

Yours sincerely,

(Ms Adeline Wan)
for Secretary for Home Affairs

Encl.

cc. SB (Attn : Ms. Angelina Kwan)
HWFB (Attn : Ms. Phidias Tam)

Number of CSSA recipients by age and the percentage distribution, 1993 – 2003

Age group	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Below 15	19 612	20 257	31 348	44 453	57 694	84 064	84 964	81 014	88 978	106 680	118 864
	(16.2%)	(16.2%)	(18.0%)	(19.9%)	(20.4%)	(22.8%)	(22.6%)	(22.2%)	(22.4%)	(22.9%)	(22.8%)
15 – 59	30 992	32 886	50 679	69 919	94 007	136 410	138 741	130 704	148 536	189 736	224 339
	(25.6%)	(26.3%)	(29.1%)	(31.3%)	(33.3%)	(37.0%)	(36.8%)	(35.8%)	(37.4%)	(40.6%)	(42.9%)
60 and over	70 456	71 902	92 128	109 012	130 922	148 149	152 802	153 467	159 954	170 452	179 253
	(58.2%)	(57.5%)	(52.9%)	(48.8%)	(46.3%)	(40.2%)	(40.6%)	(42.0%)	(40.2%)	(36.5%)	(34.3%)
Total	121 060	125 045	174 155	223 384	282 623	368 623	376 507	365 185	397 468	466 868	522 456
	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)

Notes : (1) Figures are as at end of the year, which include CSSA recipients among all CSSA cases.

(2) % in brackets denotes proportions to totals.