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4 August 2006

Dr the Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Chairman, Panel on Welfare Services
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Dr CHEUNG,

**Joint meeting of the Panel on Welfare Services and
Panel on Manpower on 6 July 2006**

**Measures to promote employment opportunities
for people with disabilities**

Thank you for your letter of 7.7.2006.

This department shares your view that statistics on persons with disabilities is useful for better understanding the service needs of those people. To provide comprehensive and reliable statistics on them, our existing arrangement is to collect information on persons with disabilities once every 5 years or so (in the form of a disability module attached to the General Household Survey). This is in line with the existing practice of some advanced countries/territories (such as the United States, Canada, Australia and United Kingdom).

The reasons for the above arrangement are:

- (i) There is no frame of persons with disabilities in Hong Kong at present. We have to rely on a household survey to identify persons with disabilities residing in domestic households

- (2) The topic of disability is complicated and of sensitive nature. It is considered that a statistical survey with comprehensive and well-designed questionnaire and also well-trained and experienced enumerators is an appropriate vehicle for collecting reliable information on persons with disabilities. Against this background, the topic of disability is considered not suitable for inclusion in population censuses or by-censuses which are conducted by temporary enumerators (who are mostly students).
- (3) The prevalence rates of some disability types are expected to be rather low in Hong Kong. The sample size of the household survey has to be sufficiently large (say, around 30 000-40 000 households) for detailed statistical analysis on persons with different types of disability. It would be very resource demanding if a dedicated survey is to be mounted on this specific subject.
- (4) A more cost-effective approach is to make use of the supplementary enquiry module in the General Household Survey (GHS) conducted by this department. The purpose of this module is to canvass various selected social topics at scheduled intervals so as to provide a sufficiently comprehensive database for facilitating analysis of the Hong Kong population on different social fronts.
- (5) In order not to overload respondents and with due regard to other constraints, it is only possible to cover one social topic at a time. Currently, a considerable number of social topics (mostly labour-related topics) have been shortlisted for enquiry via the supplementary module and that includes the topic of Disability. The first survey on persons with disabilities was conducted during the period January-December 2000 through this mechanism. The next updating survey for the Disability topic has been scheduled to start in the 4th quarter of this year and will collect data from household samples over the next four quarters. This arrangement will secure a sufficiently large sample for detailed analysis. Having regard to the long survey period required by the disability survey (normally about one year), the survey will be repeated once every 5 years or so. The schedule of social topics will be kept under review with a view to ascertaining any room of allowing more frequent updating of the Disability topic.

To shed light on the employment situation of persons with disabilities, we are considering collection of relevant detailed information in the coming supplementing enquiry on disability. Specifically, the past working experience of disabled people and their intention for work at present will be asked, on top of the basic employment information required to classify the persons into unemployed and otherwise. I hope such information could facilitate better understanding of the characteristics of persons with disabilities and for more in-depth studies.

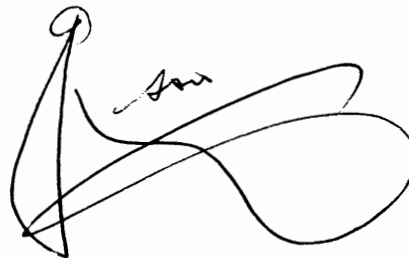
As regards the definition of unemployment rate, please note that persons who are not working and being available for work, but not seeking work in the belief that work is not available (probably due to their previous failures in getting employment) are regarded as so-called "discouraged workers", and have also been included as *unemployed persons* in the GHS. Details on the definition of unemployed persons adopted in the GHS is at the Appendix.

In Hong Kong, statistics on the labour force, employment and unemployment are compiled in accordance with the conceptual framework recommended by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The recommendations regarding definitions and other related issues have been based on research and in-depth discussions among many economists, sociologists, statisticians and statistical practitioners concerned, and are highly rational. There are merits and requirements in using the ILO recommendations, including the fact that adoption of the ILO approach facilitates international comparison.

Should you have any queries or need further information, please feel free to contact Ms Rebecca SIU (Tel.: 2887 5500; e-mail: rwfsiu@censtatd.gov.hk) or Miss Freda TUNG (Tel.: 2887 5501; e-mail: fswtung@censtatd.gov.hk).

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fung Hing-wang', written over a large, stylized scribble.

(FUNG Hing-wang)

Commissioner for Census and Statistics

c.c. The Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP (Chairman, Panel on Manpower) Fax: 25090775
Commissioner for Rehabilitation (Attn : Mrs Mary MA) Fax: 2543 0486
Commissioner for Labour (Attn : Mr TSANG Kin-woo) Fax: 2805 1127

**Definition of unemployed population
adopted in the General Household Survey**

- 1) This comprises all unemployed persons. For a person aged 15 or over to be classified as unemployed, that person should:
 - (a) not have had a job and should not have performed any work for pay or profit during the seven days before enumeration; **and**
 - (b) have been available for work during the seven days before enumeration; **and**
 - (c) have sought work during the thirty days before enumeration.

Besides, if a person aged 15 or over fulfils the conditions (a) and (b) above but has not sought work during the thirty days before enumeration because he/she believed that work was not available, he/she is still classified as unemployed, being regarded as a so-called '*discouraged worker*'.

- 2) Notwithstanding the above, the following types of persons are also classified as unemployed:
 - (a) persons without a job, have sought work but have not been available for work because of temporary sickness; **and**
 - (b) persons without a job, have been available for work but have not sought work because they:
 - i) have made arrangements to take up a new job or to start business at a subsequent date; **or**
 - ii) were expecting to return to their original jobs (e.g. casual workers are usually called back to work when service is needed).