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**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

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for the meeting on 11 June 2013**

**Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund**

In view of the declining fisheries resources, the rising operating costs of local fishermen and the increasing competition from non-local fishing vessels, the Government set up the Committee on Sustainable Fisheries ("the Committee") in late 2006 to study the long-term direction and goals for the development of the fisheries industry in Hong Kong. In its report submitted to the Government in April 2010, the Committee recommended strategies on three fronts to promote the sustainable development of the local fisheries industry, namely promotion of modernized and sustainable practices; control of fishing effort; and conservation and enhancement of fisheries resources.

2. To promote the modernization and development of sustainable fisheries, the Committee recommended, among others, the establishment of a "Sustainable Fisheries Funding Scheme" to provide financial assistance to fishermen, fishermen organizations, academic institutes or non-profit-making organizations for carrying out research and development programmes which would help improve the operating environment and competitiveness of the entire industry or restore marine and fisheries resources.

3. At the special meeting of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene ("the Panel") on 21 January 2013 to receive a briefing from the Secretary for Food and Health on the 2013 Policy Address in relation to food safety and environmental hygiene matters, members were advised that the

Administration would set up a Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund ("the Fund") of \$500 million to provide for financial assistance for projects and researches conducive to the sustainable development of the fisheries industry. The assistance would encompass, among other things, areas such as monitoring, protecting and enhancing fisheries resources, as well as promotion of best aquaculture practices and sustainable fisheries operations. A committee consisting of both non-officials and officials would be set up to advise on the use of the Fund. The Administration would consult the trade and other stakeholders before finalizing the details and seeking funding approval from the Legislative Council.

4. Issues relating to the development of the fisheries industry had been discussed at meetings held by the Panel. On promoting the sustainability of the fisheries industry, members urged the Administration to formulate a long-term plan for the sustainable development of the fisheries industry. The main purpose of the plan should be to assist fishermen in developing or switching to modernized and sustainable practices, such as developing eco-tourism and recreational fishing in Hong Kong. To enable fishermen to switch to other sustainable modes of operation, members also urged the Administration to provide the fishing community with financial assistance and technical support. Consideration should also be given to conducting studies on the development of recreational fishing such as leisure fishing and eco-tours in order to create more local tourist attractions.