

(Translation)

**Hon Steven HO's motion on
"Fully implementing the interim policies for
squatter structures and agricultural structures"**

Wording of the Motion

That the policies for squatter structures and agricultural structures have been in place since the era of the British Hong Kong Government; following the changes in society, the relevant laws have long become outdated and left behind quite a number of historical problems, including lax law enforcement under the British Hong Kong Government and the SAR Government, with some officials even giving tacit consent to certain unreasonable practices; yet when legal problems arise, the relevant responsibilities have to be borne solely by the people; furthermore, the current inadequate communication between some frontline government officers and squatter residents have resulted in tremendous conflicts between the Government and the people, thereby making squatter control more difficult in future; in addition, between 2015 and 2020, the number of squatter structures on private agricultural land and government land alone has reduced by about 7 000, putting unnecessary pressure on people's demand for residential buildings; besides, farmers are required to apply to the Government for erecting agricultural structures on agricultural land, but the cumbersome application procedures and excessively long vetting and approval time have rendered the entire application process seriously lagging behind; some farmers have relayed that as the relevant application procedures required vetting by quite a number of government departments, the application process might be procrastinated for as long as two to three years, or even without any progress for a long time, coupled with the fact that the exorbitant charges incurred in the applications exceed farmers' affordability, farmers often get disproportionate returns on their efforts; to resolve the historical problems of squatter structures and agricultural structures and alleviate the conflicts between the Government and the people, this Council urges the Government to expeditiously and fully implement the interim policies for squatter structures and agricultural structures; the specific measures are as follows:

- (1) retaining as far as possible the existing squatter structures and, on the premise of structural safety, reducing the demolition of squatter structures and reducing the cancellation of squatter survey numbers, so that residents will not be rendered homeless and their daily lives will not be affected;

- (2) reviewing the relevant policy on repairing squatter structures, and relaxing the requirements on materials for repairing squatter structures;
- (3) appropriately relaxing the issuing arrangements for single-storey agricultural structures with height not exceeding 4.57 metres but an area exceeding 1 000 square feet in the New Territories; while at the same time considering setting up funds to subsidize farmers to engage qualified technicians to certify the structural safety of the structures, or providing this service by the relevant government departments or even exploring other feasible arrangements; and
- (4) flexibly processing applications for erecting agricultural structures, including setting a no-objection notice period and granting provisional permission to farmers, so that they can commence the works as soon as possible.