立法會
Legislative Council

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LegCo Panels on Planning, Lands and Works and Environmental Affairs

Minutes of joint meeting held on Thursday, 27 January 2000, at 4:30 pm in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present :

Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Hon Edward HO Sing-tin, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon HO Sai-chu, SBS, JP
* Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP

Panel on Environmental Affairs

Hon Christine LOH (Chairman)
Hon HUI Cheung-ching (Deputy Chairman)
Prof Hon NG Ching-fai
Hon Margaret NG
Hon CHAN Wing-chan
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP

(* Also members of the LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs)

Non-Panel member attending : Hon CHAN Yuen-han

Members absent : Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Wing-tat
* Hon Ronald ARCULLI, JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
* Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP

Panel on Environmental Affairs

Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Dr Hon LEONG Che-hung, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo

(* Also member of the Panel on Environmental Affairs)

Public officers attending : Mr Wilson FUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Planning, and Lands (Planning)

Mr Augustine NG
Assistant Director of Planning/Territorial

Mr Steve M LAISTER
Executive Director
Environmental Resources Management

Clerk in attendance : Miss Odelia LEUNG, Chief Assistant Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Miss Irene MAN, Senior Assistant Secretary (1)9

I Election of Chairman

Mr Edward HO was elected Chairman for the joint Panel meeting.

II Study on Sustainable Development in Hong Kong for the 21st Century
(LC Paper No. CB(1)868/99-00(01))

2. As an introduction, the Chairman advised that the meeting was a continuation of the joint Panel meeting held on 9 December 1999 to enable members to raise further questions on the Study on Sustainable Development in Hong Kong for the 21st Century (SUSDEV 21). A further information paper was provided by the Administration to address members' concerns raised at the last meeting.

Definition of sustainable development

3. Miss Emily LAU reiterated her concern about the definition of sustainable development which had not included the political aspect. She said that similar concern had been expressed by many participants at a public consultation forum on the subject held on 6 January 2000. She renewed her call to the Administration to actively consider human rights, the legal system, constitutional development and the pace of democracy as guiding principles and indicators of sustainable development. Miss LAU stressed that these indicators could be measured in terms of, for example, the number of registered voters, the voting rate, the number of members elected through direct election, the number of legal aid applications, the number of lawyers providing free legal advice, etc. Noting that the Hong Kong Council of Social Services (HKCSS) had conducted a comprehensive research on these issues, she suggested that the Administration should make reference to the research findings.

4. In response, Principal Assistant Secretary for Planning and Lands (Planning) (PAS/PL) explained that the objectives of holding the public consultation forum were to introduce the progress of SUSDEV 21 and to receive public views. The Administration considered it not appropriate to make amendments to the consultants' recommendations in the course of these consultation meetings before the consultation exercise was completed and all the views received carefully studied and assessed. The Administration had taken note of the views expressed at the public consultation forum and would request the consultants to examine how some social pointers such as human rights and constitutional development, etc. could be incorporated into the Computer Aided Sustainability Evaluation Tool (CASET).

Sustainability indicators

5. Miss CHAN Yuen-han enquired about the criteria and the timetable for processing the suggestions on sustainability indicators received during the public consultation. PAS/PL advised that a total of 216 suggestions for sustainability indicators had been received during the past public consultation activities. 98 of these suggestions had already been accommodated within the 39 recommended indicators at Annex B to the information paper. Six suggested indicators which were set out at Annex E would be considered for future inclusion as there was insufficient information at present. The remaining suggested indicators were considered not

suitable for adoption because they were either not sensitive to change or representative or indicative of wider effects. PAS/PL informed members that a Consultation Report setting out all proposed indicators and explaining the reasons for adoption or otherwise of these indicators would be produced after the latest round of consultation.

6. The Assistant Director of Planning/Territorial (AD of P/T) added that the second round of public consultation would expire by 31 January 2000. Nevertheless, suggestions from the general public received after the deadline would still be considered. It would take about six weeks to organize and respond to the views collected before the publication of the Consultation Report in about April 2000.

7. Mr CHAN Wing-chan was of the view that sustainable development in Hong Kong should be considered in the broader regional context. The Mainland factor should not be overlooked in the process. For instance, air quality could only be improved by cooperation between the Hong Kong and the Mainland authorities. He called on the Administration to include the Mainland concept into the definition generally and the list of sustainability indicators specifically.

8. PAS/PL advised that the proposed definition of sustainable development in Hong Kong embraced local, national and international levels. As to how these concepts could be reflected in the indicators, he said that the purpose of the indicators included in the CASET was not only to reflect the position and development of activities such as the level of education or the extent of economic growth but also to help assess the impact of policy initiatives. As far as the 39 sustainability indicators were concerned, they were working tools and did not have territorial boundaries. Neither were they intended to dictate Government policies at different levels. On cross-boundary issues, different committees had been set up to look at different spheres, such as Infrastructure Co-ordinating Committee, Hong Kong and Guangdong Environmental Protection Liaison Group, etc. The Commission on Strategic Development chaired by the Chief Executive also examined macro cross-boundary issues.

9. Notwithstanding the Administration's explanation, Mr CHAN Wing-chan remained of the view that a concrete sustainability indicator covering the national concept should be included. Professor NG Ching-fai and Miss CHAN Yuen-han shared the member's view that the concept of sustainable development should go beyond the local boundary. PAS/PL undertook to consider ways of better reflecting the cross-boundary concept in the indicators.

Admin.

Environmental quality

10. Miss Christine LOH said that climate change was considered very significant by many overseas countries in the context of sustainable development. She queried why this had not been adopted as a guiding principle. The Executive Director of Environmental Resources Management (ED/ERM) advised that a reference of climate change could be subsumed under the broad guiding principle of environmental quality.

Specifically the emission of carbon dioxide which had been selected as an indicator would be indicative of climate change. He noted Miss LOH's remark that the guiding principles should use internationally-recognized terms and phrases for ease of reference.

11. Noting that six indicators would be considered for inclusion in future, Miss Christine LOH said that some of them were important, for example, indoor air quality should be adopted at present. In response, PAS/PL explained that the selection of indicators was in accordance with the criteria at Annex C to the information paper. Suggested indicators which did not meet these criteria were not selected. Whether sufficient information was available now was one of the important considerations. Theoretically the Administration could collate information on each of the suggested indicators but this approach would be time-consuming and incur considerable resources. The selected 39 indicators were only the first batch of indicators and the list could be revised as and when necessary in future.

12. Acknowledging that the Administration started off by selecting a first batch of indicators, Miss Christine LOH highlighted that indoor air quality should merit earlier attention. She urged bureaux/departments to collate and analyze information on other indicators at an early stage so that it would be easier to expand the initial batch in future. PAS/PL said that the Administration agreed with the member's view and would include indoor air quality as an indicator as early as practicable.

Natural resources

13. Professor NG Ching-fai suggested including an indicator showing the rate of waste recovery and recycling as recycling was important to preservation of global resources. He also enquired whether large organizations and public bodies in Hong Kong would be required to implement sustainable development policies. ED/ERM said that the indicator regarding "the quantity of municipal solid waste, public fill and construction and demolition waste requiring final disposal per capita" measured waste recycling indirectly. PAS/PL advised that it was the overall direction of the Administration to implement sustainable development policies although the SUSDEV 21 study was not designed to come up with concrete policy proposals for individual department and bureau to implement.

Society and social infrastructure

14. Mr LAW Chi-kwong criticized the absence of indicators to measure poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor. He opined that the average waiting time for public rental housing (PRH) was a much better indicator than "the average length of waiting list" to assess the adequacy of housing resources to meet people's need. He considered the indicator about "the living space per person" unable to reflect the living standard of the lowest echelon in the community.

15. ED/ERM said that the indicator under the scope of "economy" concerning

"the percentage change in income less income tax for the upper quartile household minus the percentage change in income less income tax for the lower quartile" monitored the gap between the rich and the poor and could assess the effect of any proposed policy on the two groups. ED/ERM also said that the average length of waiting for PRH could be expressed in terms of waiting time or the number of applicants. He nevertheless agreed to consider the member's view.

16. Regarding the adoption of the indicator about "the living space per person", AD of P/T explained that information on the living space of the lowest stratum of the population was not readily available. Mr LAW Chi-kwong did not accept the explanation, pointing out that the Administration must have the distribution figures in order to work out the average living space per person. As such, there should not be any problem in finding out the median of living space and the living space for the lowest quartile of the population. ED/ERM said that the statistics provided by the Administration should be able to work either ways to obtain the relevant figures within the bounds. He agreed to check on the composition of the statistics.

Admin.

17. Mr LAW Chi-kwong further pointed out that it was outdated to adopt an indicator concerning "the percentage of population living within a short walk of a community hall" as the Administration had stopped building community halls for six years. ED/ERM explained that an indicator which would give an idea of how people got together was considered necessary. Suggestions such as the percentage of residential blocks having large shopping malls or private clubhouses had been considered. Mr LAW remarked that the concept of getting people into the community hall should be taken away as more and more people got around in the chatrooms on the internet.

Health and Hygiene

18. The Chairman opined that there were too few indicators under the category of "Health and Hygiene". He pointed out that the first indicator which measured public satisfaction with the cleanliness of Hong Kong was subjective. The second indicator was narrow in scope because it related to respiratory diseases only. He considered that indicators like incidents of food poisoning, occurrence of infectious diseases and mortality rate should be included to give a better picture of the conditions of health and hygiene in Hong Kong.

19. ED/ERM said that as part of the Healthy Living Campaign, the Home Affairs Bureau conducted quarterly surveys to gauge public views on Hong Kong's cleanliness. These surveys would be continued in the coming three years and would be a useful and instant way of knowing the general thoughts of the public about cleanliness. On the indicator concerning respiratory diseases, ED/ERM said that the consultants had discussed with the Hospital Authority who considered that there was sufficient understanding of the cause and effect between air pollution and respiratory diseases. The occurrence of infectious diseases had not been chosen as an indicator because medical experts were of the view that infectious diseases tended to come in waves

which were not particularly related to anything which could be controlled. As regards food poisoning, ED/ERM said that there were fundamental difficulties in establishing the cause and effect relationship since food poisoning could come from different sources.

20. Miss Margaret NG pointed out that all other indicators were objective and measurable except the indicator which measured public satisfaction with the cleanliness of Hong Kong. In response, ED/ERM explained that effort had been made to come up with more objective indicators for health and cleanliness. For instance, black spots had been considered as an indicator but again, these would have to be nominated by people which would inevitably be subjective. It was difficult to come up with an objective indicator of cleanliness which could apply territory-wide. Nevertheless, to increase the objectivity of the surveys on public satisfaction with cleanliness, the questionnaires would be designed in such a way as to address different parts of Hong Kong and would cover a wide range of facilities including streets, markets, public toilets, food premises, etc.

21. Miss Margaret NG said that survey results could be manipulated by the time surveys were conducted and by the type of questions to be asked. The results of surveys could be quite distorting. She suggested replacing the present indicator with a more objective one, or if this could not be done, deleting the present one altogether. ED/ERM said that sustainable development aimed at achieving what people wanted and the present indicator could provide a reasonable cover. In his view, it would be a pity if an indicator measuring the cleanliness of Hong Kong was taken out.

22. The Chairman said that there were better ways to measure cleanliness and people's state of health, such as the average length of stay in hospitals. The concept of health was multi-faceted covering visual, environmental and physical aspects. The two selected ones were certainly deficient in coverage. The Administration agreed to review the two indicators.

Admin.

General issues

23. Miss CHAN Yuen-han took the view that the 39 indicators had not reflected prevailing urgent problems such as poverty, the relationship between economic development and education level of the working population, and the relationship between population and job opportunities. Mr CHAN Wing-chan echoed this view and suggested including the Gini coefficient which measured the level of income in equality, the Government social service expenditure per capita, the education level of population and university graduates to population ratio as indicators. Mr TAM Yiu-chung suggested including the quality of life of the elderly as an indicator and informed that the University of Hong Kong was conducting a research on the subject.

24. PAS/PL said that the selected indicators were not intended to reflect or address every issue of public concern. Nevertheless, he noted members' concern and would try to address them in the final report. He assured members that apart from

relying on the CASET, the Administration would consider other relevant factors and would use other tools where necessary in policy formulation. The Administration also welcomed research information from any source on a subject of public concern.

25. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that the 39 indicators could not possibly cover each and every aspect of sustainability development. It could be expected that certain indicators would not be included if the Administration could not achieve or improve the aspects concerned. In this connection, Miss Emily LAU sought clarification on whether there was a guiding principle that the Administration would only select indicators which were achievable. She considered that important measurable indicators should also be included despite that they could not be achieved.

26. PAS/PL clarified that there was no such guiding principle. The findings and recommendations of SUSDEV 21 had not been formally submitted to the Executive Council for approval. The Administration discussed with every bureau on selection of indicators which best reflected their policy objective or concern and on the type of data that was readily available. The adoption of too many indicators would obstruct rather than facilitate the planning of policies as bureaux had to collate considerable amount of information. He stressed that even if certain indicators had not been chosen at this stage, the Administration would not ignore information or statistical data that had been collected by different bodies on the issue. AD of P/T supplemented that the process of selecting the indicators was very elaborate, making reference to overseas experience. It was a matter of opinion on whether 39 indicators were adequate. The experience in the United Kingdom showed that the country went for a long list of indicators at the beginning and reduced their number gradually.

27. Miss Christine LOH was concerned about the process of selecting indicators. She considered that there was an inherent problem in the process in that only those indicators which the bureaux were comfortable with were chosen. The Planning and Lands Bureau (PLB) which was responsible for SUSDEV 21 was in a passive position. If bureaux or departments refused to provide information, PLB could not do anything but to accept it. This explained why some suggested indicators which were better than the selected ones had not been chosen.

28. ED/ERM said that the Technical Report on the Formulation of Indicators, which could be downloaded on the internet, had set out the reasons for selecting some but not other indicators. Considerations for other alternatives were also presented in the Report. PAS/PL explained that in selecting indicators, the key question was how these indicators would respond to a policy initiative (i.e. sensitivity to change). It was possible to select hundreds of indicators but it was doubtful whether they were necessary to assess the impact of a policy initiative. The Chairman requested and PAS/PL undertook to provide members with the Technical Report.

(*Post-meeting note*: the Report on the Study on Sustainable Development for the 21st Century: Guiding Principles, Indicators and Evaluative Criteria was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 935/99-00.)

29. Mr HUI Cheung-ching was concerned whether the Administration would review the 39 indicators regularly since other indicators had been suggested in the public consultation. Mrs Sophie LEUNG shared the concern and stressed that the selected indicators should be reviewed from time to time to keep pace with development. The proposed indicators for inclusion in future such as computer literacy should also be developed to meet future expectations. Human productivity should also be considered for inclusion as an indicator. PAS/PL assured members that upon the implementation of the CASET, the indicators would be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. AD of P/T supplemented that the bureaux/departments concerned had already been requested to start compiling information on the proposed indicators. For example, the Planning Department had already commenced a study on landscape value.

30. Mrs Sophie LEUNG opined that the Administration should be more proactive in the selection of indicators which should reflect not only the current but the future trends. The Administration should not adopt a result-oriented approach in selecting indicators but should take a building block perspective. The Administration noted the member's suggestions.

31. Miss Emily LAU was concerned where the proposed Council for Sustainable Development (CSD) and the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) would be placed in the Government hierarchy. She said that unless these bodies were conferred with sufficient power, it would be difficult for them to monitor the implementation of sustainability evaluation for major policies proposed by other bureaux/departments. In response, PAS/PL said that the Administration had not yet decided on the detailed arrangements for CSD and SDU. The Administration would consider the recommendations of the consultants before making the final decision. He undertook to report to the Panel once the details of the institutional arrangements had been finalized.

Admin.

32. The Chairman said that since the current Legislative Council (LegCo) would dissolve after 30 June 2000, the Administration should report to the Panel before the dissolution. PAS/PL said that the Administration would consider the final report of consultants which should be ready by April 2000 and subject to the consideration of the recommendations by the Chief Executive-in-Council, would advise in due course on whether the Administration could report progress to the Panel before the dissolution of LegCo.

Legislative Council Secretariat
2 March 2000