

**WOMEN'S COMMISSION**  
**Notes of the 74th Meeting held on 1 November 2013**

<u>Present:</u>	Mrs Stella LAU	(Chairperson)
	Miss Annie TAM	(Vice-chairperson)
<u>Absent with Apologies:</u>	Ms Doris CHEUNG	
	Ms Teresa AU	
	Ms AU YEUNG Po-chun	
	Dr Polly CHEUNG	
	Ms Aruna GURUNG	
	Dr Maggie KOONG	
	Prof LAM Ching-man	
	Ms Leona LAM	
	Ms LAM Yuk-chun	
	Dr Trisha LEAHY	
	Ms Juan LEUNG	
	Dr LEUNG Lai-ching	
	Mrs Miranda LEUNG	
	Mr Philip TSAI	
	Ms Catherine WONG	
	Mr Robert WONG	
	Ms WONG Shu-ming	
	Miss Rabi YIM	
	Ms Constance YUE	
	Ms Carol YIP	
	Mr D C CHEUNG	Director for Social Welfare Principal Assistant Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (5)
<u>In attendance:</u>	Dr Ronnie HUI	
	Ms Sandy WONG	
	Miss Fiona LI	PAS (Welfare)2
	Mr Louis LO	AS (Welfare)2A (Secretary)
	Mr Ricky CHENG	AS (Welfare)2B
	Miss Noel NG	AS (Welfare)2C
	Ms Cheryl TSANG	SEO (Welfare)2
	Miss W K HUI	PPO (Welfare)2
	Mr S H LEUNG	RPO (Welfare)2

For Agenda Item 1	<u>Chief Secretary for the Administration's Private Office</u> Mr Patrick NIP Ms Eugenia CHUNG	Director (Special Duties) Senior Administrative Officer
For Agenda Item 2	Prof Nora TAM Dr Keith CHOY Dr Tommy MARTIN Miss Pearl LAM	Member, Sustainability Council Hong Kong Productivity Council Hong Kong Productivity Council Social Sciences Research Centre, University of Hong Kong

### **Opening Remarks by the Chairperson**

1.1 The Chairperson welcomed Ms Juan LEUNG, a new member of WoC; Ms Carol YIP, the newly-appointed Director of Social Welfare; and Mr Ricky CHENG, a new colleague of the secretariat.

### **Item 1: Public Engagement Exercise on Population Policy “Thoughts for Hong Kong” (WoC 09/13)**

2.1 The Chairperson welcomed Mr Patrick NIP, Director (Special Duties) of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office, and Ms Eugenia CHUNG to attend this meeting to listen to members' views on population policy.

2.2 The Administration introduced the paper WoC 09/13.

2.3 Members expressed the following views during the discussion -

- the consultation document was well drafted to be gender-inclusive and avoid gender-stereotyping of the family roles of women and men. That said, in discussing the possible measures to promote women

employment, stakeholders should avoid assuming that household duties which were part of the duties of her family as a whole had to be borne by women alone;

- the scope of the public engagement exercise focused on the growth of labour force and economic development. In formulating a comprehensive population policy, due consideration should be given to economic considerations, the social needs and development of people;
- a broad-brush approach had been adopted in the Consultation Document and it would be important for the Administration to take a step forward in working out some detailed policy proposals;
- women employment was being elaborated in the Consultation Document from a manpower shortage angle. However, it should be emphasised that women had the right to work. Employment would benefit women by improving their confidence, financial situation and social mobility. Women should not be treated as a backup labour force;
- since many homemakers, who were mainly women, were tied up by the duties to take care of their children, the provision of child care services was necessary if women were able to join the workforce. Child care services should be improved and child care allowance should be provided to enhance support for homemakers and encourage women employment. Child care cum education, i.e. educare, should be considered;
- currently, the places of child care centres (including day nurseries) were insufficient and the fees were high. People who had genuine need might not have access to such services sometimes as they failed to pass the means test, the threshold of which was high. The Administration should consider strengthening the support for those in need;

- social workers should be arranged to station at child care centres to identify and handle problematic children and families in need of parenting support early. Stationing social workers could also provide parental education for parents so as to alleviate family problems and the resulting negative impact on children. A dedicated resource centre should be set up to provide centralised and comprehensive information on parenting;
- to facilitate parents who had to take care of their children and go to work, the Administration should further promote family friendly employment practices and policies such as longer maternity leave (perhaps with full pay), job sharing, part-time jobs, leave for taking care of sick children, etc. Since most of the part-time positions in the job market were low-skilled and unappealing to those women who were well educated, the Administration and the business sector might consider developing part-time positions which require a higher skill level to attract those women back to work;
- domestic helpers have been helping women with their house work and child care duties. In addition to the Philippines and Indonesia, the Administration could consider importing domestic workers from places including, for example, the Mainland China, so as to increase the supply of domestic workers;
- in deciding whether to bear a child, young couples were often concerned about the financial impact of childbearing, their abilities to earn a living and career prospect. To increase the birth rate, it was important to address the problem of job insecurity faced by young people and increase the diversity of jobs by developing new industries. In the interim, the Administration might consider introducing tax incentives to encourage child birth;
- the birth rate of new arrivals was generally high and might help slow down the decrease in the birth rate in Hong Kong. Against this background, instead of

boosting birth rate, focus should be placed on the provision of support services to nurture the next generation with mixed background. Child care services and other children development initiatives should be diversified and designed with due consideration to the varying background and socio-economic status of children;

- the business sector supported importing talents and foreign labour which could solve the labour shortage in a few industries but the implementation details should be explained further;
- young people would be very concerned about the loss of job opportunities resulting from importation of labour. The Administration should strengthen vocational training and education programmes to better equip the young working population with the required skills and knowledge. The Administration might also try to attract young people to join those industries with severe labour shortage through promoting the image of such industries;
- it would not be cost effective to use public money to support couples to bear children through reproductive technology since it might incentivise women to further delay their childbearing. Since reproductive technology would involve high cost, it would be more effective if the money was invested in education and child care services; and
- a child should best be raised by his/her family. It was not good for family solidarity and development of children if parents were to leave their children to child care centres frequently for a long period of time. It was important to preserve the virtue of family support in taking care of children.

2.4 The Administration thanked members for their views and stressed that the consultation document set out a long-term vision which would cater for the social and economic needs of our community. The public engagement exercise was designed to focus on some board issues for building consensus

on the direction only in order to avoid premature and lengthy discussion of details of the concrete proposals. Since different bureaux and departments have been implementing policies that were related to population policy, the Steering Committee on Population Policy would relay the views received to relevant bureaux and departments for consideration and follow-up as appropriate when the public engagement exercise was completed.

2.5 The Chairperson proposed and members agreed that the WoC should make a submission to the Steering Committee on Population Policy based on the views expressed by members. The Secretariat would prepare a draft submission and circulate it for members' comments.

**Item 2: Public Engagement on Municipal Solid Waste Charging “Waste Reduction by Waste Charging • How to Implement?” (WoC 10/13)**

3.1 The Chairperson welcomed Professor Nora TAM, member of the Council of Sustainable Development, Dr Keith CHOY and Mr Tommy MARTIN from the Hong Kong Productivity Council, and Miss Pearl LAM from the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong to exchange views with members on the public engagement on municipal solid waste charging.

3.2 Professor TAM introduced the paper WoC 10/13.

3.3 Members expressed the following views during the discussion -

- the proposed municipal solid waste charging scheme was supported as the imposition of environmental levy on plastic shopping bag had proven that providing monetary disincentive was able to induce behavioural change. Nevertheless, to ensure the effectiveness of the scheme, the fee level should be reasonable and the scheme should be implemented to all sectors in one go;
- the Administration should offer assistance to low

income families by, for example, providing subsidies or setting a standard amount of waste below which the charge would be waived;

- the scheme should be supported by comprehensive recycling policies and measures, including providing financial support to the recycling industry, promoting recycling through public education and increasing the types and number of recycling bins in town, such that people would be more motivated to sort domestic waste;
- the Administration should expand the “Community Green Stations” pilot scheme and set up the stations in more districts to facilitate local residents to recycle domestic waste. To enhance the effectiveness of the pilot scheme, non-governmental organisations should be allowed to have greater involvement in running the stations;
- the opportunity should be taken to launch public education programmes at schools. For example, schools should organise waste reduction campaigns and place more recycling bins in the campus;
- the charging scheme might add heavy burden to some families. The Administration could consider provision of tax concessions to incentivise producers of furniture and home appliances to proactively collect old/disposed products from households and recycle them; and
- to gain public support for the scheme and ensure its smooth implementation, a trial period could be arranged so that people would get used to the scheme before they were actually charged.

3.4 Prof TAM thanked members for their views and advice. In response to the suggestion on offering assistance to low-income families, she said that the Sustainability Council was considering a proposal of providing a dedicated subsidy for families in need or adopt a baseline below which the disposal of waste would be free of charge. The Council would recommend

the proposal to the Administration should it receive public support. On the “Community Green Stations” pilot scheme, she said that the Administration would engage NGOs to run the stations and yet the overall arrangements of the pilot scheme and the stations would be decided by the Administration. In conclusion, she urged members to assist in promoting the proposed charging scheme in the community so that more members of the public would be aware of the purpose of the proposal.

### **Item 3: Confirmation of Minutes of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Meeting (WoC 11/13)**

4.1 The minutes of the 73<sup>rd</sup> meeting were confirmed without amendment.

### **Item 4: Verbal Report by Working Groups**

5.1 The Meeting noted the verbal reports made by the respective working groups.

5.2 In response to members’ suggestion that WoC should concentrate its work on a few issues next year, the Meeting concluded that WoC would focus on women employment next year as agreed at previous WoC meetings. The Secretariat would prepare some background information to facilitate WoC’s further discussion on the possible measures for promoting women employment at future meetings. WoC would also exchange views with NGOs and women’s groups on the subject, adopt “women employment” as the theme for the Funding Scheme for Women’s Development and consider launching pilot projects to encourage women employment where appropriate.

### **Item 5: Secretary’s Report (WoC 12/13)**

6.1 The Meeting noted the Secretary’s Report.



**Item 6: Any Other Business**

7.1 There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

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**Women's Commission Secretariat  
April 2014**