

**59th Session of UNCSW
Round table with ministerial participation on
National mechanisms for gender equality: advocates for
action and accountability, catalysts for change
11 March 2015
Speaking Points for DS(W)1**

Chair, your Excellencies, distinguished delegates:

- Thank you. I am honored to have this opportunity to speak on the mechanisms for gender equality in Hong Kong, a special administrative region of China.
- The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government spares no effort in promoting gender equality in Hong Kong. We have been faithfully implementing the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law and other local legislation.

- In response to the recommendation of the CEDAW Committee, a high-level central mechanism, the Women's Commission, has been set up in Hong Kong since 2001 to take a strategic overview of women's issues, develop a long-term vision and strategy for the development and advancement of women, and advise the Government on the policies and initiatives that are of concern to women. In addition, gender focal points (GFPs) have been appointed across Government bureaux and departments. 85% of these GFPs are officers at the directorate level. GFPs have also been appointed in all our 18 District Councils.
- In Hong Kong, the freedom of speech, of the press, of religious belief, of choice of occupation, etc. is enjoyed by everyone regardless of gender. The rights of both genders' freedoms are well protected by the Basic Law and Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance.
- Both men and women are entitled to 12-year free education,

and we are now looking into the possibility of extending to 15-year free education. Women accounted for 54.1% of the university undergraduates in 2013. Both men and women also enjoy a comprehensive range of affordable, accessible and quality healthcare services. Equal employment opportunities and related employment protection for both genders are provided by various pieces of local legislation including the Employment Ordinance and the Sex Discrimination Ordinance. 44.6% of the working population in the third quarter of 2014 was women, with a growing number of women taking up professional and senior positions.

- 2015 marks the twentieth year since the adoption of Beijing Platform For Action. 2015 is also an important year for women's development in Hong Kong. In this January, the Chief Executive of the HKSAR has announced in his Policy Address two policy initiatives on women development as recommended by the Women's Commission.

- First, starting from April 1st, all bureaux and departments in the HKSARG will be required to apply gender mainstreaming to formulating major government policies, initiatives and legislation. Institutionalising gender mainstreaming can enhance our policy formulation process during which government officers will be conscious of assessing gender implications as part of their daily work. It also provides an enabling environment to ensure that women and men have equitable access to, and benefit from, society's resources and opportunities.
- Secondly, also starting from April 1st, we will raise the gender benchmark for appointing women to Government advisory and statutory bodies (by 5 percentage points) from 30% to 35%. Government advisory and statutory bodies are important entities which involve the participation of a wide cross-section of the community and relevant organisations in the policy-formulation and public service planning processes. The raise in the gender benchmark

will be beneficial to the well-being of women by enhancing their social participation and better reflect the perspectives and concerns of both genders.

- Promoting gender equality is an issue very close to our hearts. With society's concerted efforts, we will continue to help women realise their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life.
- Thank you.