

WOMEN'S COMMISSION

Notes of the meeting held on 2 August 2023

Present:

Ms CHAN Yuen-han	(Chairperson)
Ms Shirley LAM	Permanent Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs (Vice-Chairperson)
Professor LUI Yu-hon	
Dr Kitty WU	
Ms Winnie NG	
Mr Adrian TAM	
Ms Melissa PANG	
Mrs Viola WONG HO	
Mrs Jennifer CHENG YU	
Ms JIN Ling	
Ms LAM Wai-ling	
Mrs Katherine NGAN NG	
Ms Cindy PUN	
Dr SO Wing-yee	
Ms Vivian WONG	
Ms LU Hai	
Mr Walter TSUI	
Ms Ashley TSE	
Ms Rita GURUNG	
Mr Ivan WONG	Acting Principal Assistant Secretary (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs)5/Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
Ms Wendy CHAU	Assistant Director (Family & Child Welfare)/Social Welfare Department

Absent with

Apologies:

Ms Melaine LEE
Ms Mary HUEN
Professor SHAM Mai-har

Miss Sherry TSAI

<u>In attendance:</u>	Mr Nick AU YEUNG	Deputy Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs (Home Affairs)/Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB)
	Miss Jody HUEN	Principal Assistant Secretary (Home Affairs)1(Acting)/HYAB (Secretary)
	Mr Kelvin CHEUNG	Assistant Secretary (Home Affairs)(1)2/HYAB
	Mr Toby LEUNG	Executive Officer (Home Affairs)(1)1/HYAB
<u>For Agenda Item 1:</u>	Mr Clarence LEUNG	Under Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs
	Miss Angela JONG	Assistant Secretary (Youth Affairs)(1)2/HYAB

1.1 The Chairperson welcomed all Members to the meeting and reported on the enthusiastic response received from community organisations since the launch of the Women Empowerment Fund (WEF), viz. over 160 applications were received with the total amount sought being \$50 million for the first round of the WEF. Besides, the Chairperson said that she and the co-convenors of the concerned working group had a lunch meeting with Vice-president HUANG Xiaowei of the All-China Women's Federation, the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs and the relevant colleagues responsible for women's affairs in early July. They had exchanges on various issues including ways to utilise the functions of women's groups, enhance family building and popularise China's excellent traditions and culture. The Chairperson remarked that the meeting had facilitated the work of the Women's Commission (WoC) and the Special Administrative Region Government in promoting women's development.

Confirmation of Notes of Last Meeting

1.2 The Chairperson and Members confirmed the draft notes of the last meeting without any amendment.

Agenda Item 1: Introduction to the "Youth Development Blueprint" (WoC 13/23)

1.3 With the aid of a powerpoint presentation, Mr Clarence LEUNG, Under Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, briefed Members on the Youth Development Blueprint (the Blueprint) published in December 2022.

1.4 Mr LEUNG briefed the meeting that the objective of the Blueprint was to inspire, support and embrace young people through more than 160 concrete actions and measures. Having integrated the views collected during the consultation period, the HYAB set out in the Blueprint the situation of Hong

Kong youths in education, employment, housing as well as community service and participation, and summed up the environment, challenges and opportunities faced by them. On the basis of the Blueprint, the HYAB hoped to bring up a new generation of young people nurtured with an affection for our country and Hong Kong and equipped with a global perspective, an aspiring mind-set and positive thinking. In this regard, the Government would provide an enabling environment for young people to cherish hope for the future and strive for continuous growth, so that they could unleash their full potential in society and contribute to Hong Kong, our country and the world.

1.5 In terms of guiding principles, the Blueprint encompassed six major directions, namely “Leading from the top and building strength”, “Passing on the spirit of loving our country and Hong Kong and strengthening a sense of national identity”, “Addressing diversified development needs”, “Promoting whole-person development”, “Adopting a positive attitude towards young people and enhancing youth engagement” and “Progressing with the times”. With reference to the development stages of youths, the Blueprint unveiled the Government’s corresponding actions and measures under different themes, which were organised into four chapters. Under “Exploration”, the major measures included promoting national education, strengthening awareness in the rule of law, enhancing life planning, promoting vocational and professional education and training, and facilitating exchange and internship outside Hong Kong. Under “Hope”, the major measures included capitalising on the positioning of Hong Kong, helping young people integrate into the overall development of the country, supporting youth education, enhancing employability, supporting youth innovation and entrepreneurship, and addressing the housing needs of young people. Under “Empowerment”, the major measures included enhancing youth welfare services, promoting positive thinking, and developing positive values and attitudes. Under “Contribution”, the major measures included enhancing youth participation in public affairs, promoting youth volunteer service, and establishing platforms for youth engagement.

1.6 On the implementation mechanism, the HYAB had strengthened the cross-bureaux and cross-sectoral co-ordination role of the Youth Development Commission and designated the Commissioner for Youth. The bureau would launch the Youth Dashboard to take forward the development and implementation of the Blueprint more effectively, so as to ensure that the Blueprint was a living document that kept up with the times.

1.7 Members’ views and enquiries were summarised below:

- (a) a Member enquired whether internship opportunities in Mainland government agencies might be offered to Hong Kong youths;
- (b) a Member enquired about the details of the internship opportunities offered by Mainland enterprises under the purview of the HYAB, and whether there was any overlapping with internship schemes currently offered by other associations;
- (c) a Member opined that since most of the existing youth exchange activities in the Mainland targeted young people at senior secondary level or above, it was difficult for Hong Kong youths to learn about the Motherland since early childhood. Also, the Member was of the view that consideration should be given to stepping up publicity among parents so that they would support their children’s participation in such activities. For instance, more women exchange tours could be organised to enable women to understand in person the benefits of Mainland exchange activities;

- (d) a Member suggested that more private organisations should be encouraged to organise youth activities;
- (e) a Member suggested providing more opportunities for exchange between Hong Kong youths and Mainland volunteers as well as encouraging parents and children to participate in volunteer service together;
- (f) a Member enquired whether the Blueprint had provided for any special assistance for women so that young women could strike a balance between family and career;
- (g) a Member enquired whether the Blueprint had provided for the creation of an information platform for new arrivals in Hong Kong so as to help them adapt and integrate into the local community;
- (h) a Member suggested that communication between the HYAB and the Education Bureau (EDB) should be enhanced to alleviate the learning pressure and negative emotions of students arising from the post-pandemic resumption of offline teaching and the wave of emigration;
- (i) a Member suggested increasing elements of encouragement, appreciation and fun in the Blueprint to attract more youths;
- (j) a Member enquired about the review and implementation plan of the Blueprint;
- (k) a Member suggested producing video clips of youth exchange experiences, which should be of interest to youths, for promotion via social media; and
- (l) concerning the mobile application to be launched soon, a Member enquired whether the HYAB would put in place a mechanism for monitoring online messages and interactions of youths on the platform.

1.8 The HYAB representatives' consolidated response to Members' views and questions was as follows:

- (a) the HYAB had been vigorously promoting the offer of internship opportunities in the Mainland, such as encouraging enterprises to offer internships under the Scheme on Corporate Summer Internship on the Mainland and Overseas. This year, the HYAB provided a total of 4 800 internship places under various internship programmes for young people to work as interns in Mainland authorities and enterprises (including local governments and public agencies). In addition, the HYAB had actively explored the introduction of more thematic internships in the Mainland to deepen young people's understanding of the country's development and knowledge of related academic and professional fields;
- (b) the HYAB currently organised and subsidised various youth exchange and internship programmes. Including the places provided by the EDB and other bureaux and departments, a total of about 200 000 exchange and internship places outside Hong Kong were offered this year. The HYAB recognised the need to step up publicity among parents,

especially women, to encourage more young people to participate in such activities. This was exactly where women's work and youth work could be mutually complementary. For example, the WEF had provided women with exchange activities in the Greater Bay Area to enhance their understanding of the Motherland;

- (c) the HYAB had all along encouraged non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to engage with young people so as to take advantage of the creativity of young minds to expand the range of volunteers and the scope of voluntary service;
- (d) as young people nowadays attached importance to career development and in general their family concepts were no longer confined by the traditional gender division of labour, the HYAB would study how youth policies could respond to women's aspirations for a balanced work and family life;
- (e) the HYAB had all along worked with NGOs to provide relevant services and information for new arrivals in Hong Kong;
- (f) regarding the difficulties encountered by students in adapting to the post-pandemic resumption of normal classes, the EDB and the Health Bureau had been closely monitoring the situation and maintaining close communication. In the long run, promoting the development of industries related to the "eight centres" and providing an environment more conducive to youth development could foster our young people's hope for the future;
- (g) the HYAB had been actively promoting the Blueprint, including advertising in traditional and non-traditional media, and visiting over 90 secondary schools and a number of tertiary institutions to conduct briefings. As for internship and exchange programmes, the HYAB had advertised them through social media and invited participating students to attend sharing sessions. The HYAB would present in a more popular form the highlights of the activities on social media to enhance publicity and interest, thereby attracting more young people to participate in the programmes;
- (h) the HYAB would regularly review the progress of implementation of the Blueprint and report the same to the Legislative Council; and
- (i) the HYAB would soon launch a new youth network and a mobile application to disseminate diversified information related to youth work to young people, and would set appropriate rules for the messaging and interactive functions of the mobile application.

Agenda Item 2: The Fourth Report of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (WoC 14/23)

2.1 With the aid of a powerpoint presentation, Ms Shirley LAM, Permanent Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, briefed Members that a ten-member delegation of the HKSAR Government attended the meeting of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women held in Geneva of Switzerland on 12 May 2023 (Geneva time) as part of the Chinese delegation.

2.2 Ms LAM said she had outlined in her opening statement the development of women in Hong Kong and the progress made by the Government in promoting women's interests and well-being in the

past decade. For instance, the HKSAR had all along been implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law and the local laws, including the four pieces of anti-discrimination legislation, and the Government had been dedicating resources to promote the realisation of women's due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. The Committee's experts had raised a number of questions at the meeting and the delegation of the HKSAR Government had responded to them on the spot. Notably, the delegation had reiterated that the National Security Law clearly stipulated that human rights should be respected and protected in safeguarding national security in the HKSAR, and the rights and freedoms enjoyed by residents of the HKSAR should be protected in accordance with the law.

2.3 In the final Concluding Observations, the Committee had commented and made recommendations on a number of areas, as well as noted with appreciation the relevant legislative reform in the HKSAR and welcomed the increase of resources for the WoC.

2.4 Besides, the Government had conducted publicity work through multi-faceted and multi-media channels prior to the consideration of the HKSAR's report. For instance, two local newspapers/online media had published interviews with the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs and the Permanent Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs to share with the public about the development of women in Hong Kong. A video of the Permanent Secretary's opening statement at the meeting had also been uploaded to social media platforms. Meanwhile, the HKSAR Government had taken the initiative to refute false narratives, address the Committee's concerns and make clarifications through a series of press releases. Ms LAM expressed her special gratitude for Members' assistance in producing a short video after the last WoC meeting to express the views of women in Hong Kong. Apart from being uploaded onto the social media platforms of the HYAB and the WoC, the video was also successfully brought to the attention of the international community. She emphasised that the HKSAR Government would continue to implement the CEDAW and further promote the realisation of women's due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. Members noted the related work.

Agenda Item 3: Progress Report of Working Groups of Women's Commission (WoC 15/23) and Secretary's Report (WoC 16/23)

(1) Working Group on Enabling Environment (WGEE)

3.1.1 To enhance promotion of the CEDAW to younger student groups, the Secretariat had engaged a service provider to arrange for promotion talks at schools. The service provider was responsible for the overall co-ordination of the project, including design of the course programme for the talks, liaison with schools to draw up a schedule for the talks, arrangement of speakers and assistants for course delivery, and handling of logistics arrangements. Spanning over one school year, the school talks had started since September 2022.

3.1.2 The first talk session was held on 21 September 2022. As at end-July 2023, the service provider had already arranged promotion talks on the CEDAW at 27 schools. Feedback from both students and schools was very positive.

3.1.3 Having considered the WGEE's comments, the Secretariat would call for quotation for a new round of school promotion talks. Key Performance Indicators would be specified in the contract, such that the promotion talks would be more effective and cover more students.

(2) Working Group on Collaboration and Promotion (WGCP)

3.2.1 The WEF was rolled out on 8 June 2023. A total of 167 applications, including 108 applications for general projects and 59 applications for thematic projects, were received by the closing date of the first-round application on 7 July 2023. The WGCP would vet the above applications at its meeting tentatively scheduled for late September 2023 and expected that the application results could be announced in October 2023.

3.2.2 The Funding Scheme for Women's Development would come to an end upon completion of all approved projects. The Secretariat would continue to process the applications for reimbursement for the approved projects.

(3) Working Group on Empowerment and Training (WGET)

3.3.1 The second programme year in the new contract period of the Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) covered the three semesters from November 2022 to July 2023. The enrolment situation for the three semesters was satisfactory, with 2 191, 2 371 and 2 146 enrolled students respectively. The total enrolment of the full programme year was 6 708, which fulfilled the minimum enrolment requirement stipulated in the contract. So far, the Secretariat had approved two instalments of the annual funding under the contract, totalling \$7.5 million.

3.3.2 At its meeting held on 28 February 2023, the WGET suggested that the Hong Kong Metropolitan University (HKMU) should explore ways to enhance the brand image of the CBMP in order to find a better niche in the adult learning market of Hong Kong. The Secretariat subsequently followed up on the matter and met with the HKMU in mid-May 2023 to discuss the Course Attractiveness Enhancement Plan and course positioning matters. Having regard to Members' comments at previous meetings, the Secretariat proposed that the HKMU could raise public awareness about the CBMP and boost enrolment with reference to the three directions of "developing course themes that better meet societal needs", "conducting more targeted publicity" and "enhancing liaison with district organisations" during the remaining two years of the contract. The proposal was endorsed by the WGET during the meeting held on 26 July 2023.

3.4 The Secretariat briefed Members on the meetings held and activities joined by the WoC after its meeting on 26 April 2023.

Agenda Item 4: Any Other Business

4.1 The Chairperson urged Members to attend the HKSAR Government's Policy Address consultation session on women affairs to be held on 9 August 2023.

4.2 There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon. The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, 3 January 2024.

**Women's Commission Secretariat
December 2023**