

WOMEN'S COMMISSION
Notes of the 82nd Meeting held on 3 February 2016

Present: Mrs Stella LAU (Chairperson)
Miss Annie TAM Permanent Secretary for
Labour and Welfare
(Vice-chairperson)

Professor Cecilia CHAN
Professor Shirley HUNG
Dr. Maggie KOONG
Ms Angelina KWAN
Ms Leona LAM
Dr. Trisha LEAHY
Ms Juan LEUNG
Mrs Miranda LEUNG
Ms Scarlett PONG
Dr Loletta SO
Mr. Philip TSAI
Ms Catherine WONG
Mr. Robert WONG
Ms Sandy WONG
Ms WONG Siu-wah
Ms Yvonne YEUNG
Ms Carol YIP Director of Social Welfare

Absent with Ms Aruna GURUNG
Apologies: Ms Yolanda NG
Ms WONG Shu-ming
Ms Rabi YIM
Mr. DC CHEUNG Principal Assistant
Secretary (Constitutional &
Mainland Affairs)5,
Constitutional & Mainland
Affairs Bureau

<u>In</u> <u>attendance:</u>	Mr. David LEUNG Miss Fiona LI Ms Winnie CHAN Mr. Syrus TSUI Mrs Annie CHAN	DS(Welfare)1(Ag.) PAS(Welfare)2 AS(Welfare)2A (Secretary) AS(Welfare)2C CEO(SD)
For Agenda Item 1	Ms Doris HO Ms Joyce CHEUNG	Head of Policy & Project Co-ordination Unit, Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office Senior Economist, Policy & Project Co-ordination Unit, Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office

Item 1: Public Consultation on Retirement Protection

1.1 Ms Doris HO, Head of Policy & Project Co-ordination Unit, Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office, briefed Members on the details of the public consultation on retirement protection. By way of background, Ms HO said that poverty alleviation and care for the elderly were key policy priorities of the current-term Government, and retirement protection and elderly poverty were closely linked. The Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) Schemes launched in 2000 could not fully address retirement protection for the elderly and there had been repeated calls from the community over the years for a universal retirement protection system. The Commission on Poverty (CoP) had been tasked to identify ways to enhance

retirement protection in Hong Kong with a view to better addressing the financial difficulties facing elderly people. The consultation was carried out under the name of the CoP, with a 6-month consultation period.

1.2 A Member and the Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare (PSLW) respectively declared interest as the Non-executive Director and alternate Non-executive Director of the Management Board of the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority.

1.3 A Member said that it was important to enhance the retirement protection system in Hong Kong as the existing MPF schemes might not fully support the living after retirement. There had also been criticisms in the community about the investment return and fee issues of the existing MPF schemes.

1.4 Some Members echoed that in view of the aging population and the longer life expectancy in general, it was important to educate the public on the related MPF information as well as to promote savings. The latter was particular relevant to those women who were housewives and as such

were not covered by MPF. A Member added that the Government should also consider the issue of retirement protection from a holistic perspective, taking into consideration the sustainability of various public welfare schemes and the population policy.

1.5 Some Members said that consideration should be given to enhancing the protection for female homemakers as they were not covered by the MPF. They were of the view that the homemakers' work at home should be recognised. A Member suggested offering tax allowance to breadwinners who contributed to the retirement protection of homemakers. Another Member said that more information about women in poverty and the sex segregated data on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients would help facilitate discussion from gender perspective.

1.6 A Member said that the crux of the consultation exercise was whether the “regardless of rich or poor” principle or the “those with financial needs” principle should be adopted. She was of the view that different type of taxes might be introduced (e.g. goods and services tax) in a progressive manner if

retirement protection system was to be implemented. However, another Member said that this would go against the global trend of lowering the tax rate if Hong Kong was to increase the tax.

1.7 A Member said that some middle-class might have objection to providing universal retirement protection which would appear unfair to them. Instead of “distributing candies”, consideration could be given to establishing a fund for enhancing retirement protection by using Government reserve.

1.8 A Member was of the view that the Government should also consider promoting the concept of family members or the community taking care of the elderly, with reference to similar initiatives implemented in Singapore.

1.9 A Member noted that the “offsetting” arrangement of the MPF schemes was considered not a fair treatment to the employees and suggested that it should be reviewed.

1.10 A Member said that the Government should consult the younger generation on the issue of retirement protection as they would shoulder the financial responsibilities. Young people

should also be encouraged to start making savings early.

1.11 PSLW said that the Census and Statistics Department had published the sex segregated data relating to poverty. She said that Members' views as expressed in the earlier discussion would be conveyed to the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) as part of the feedback received during the public consultation period. Should Members wish to make any additional comments, they were welcome to submit such comments to the Secretariat for onward transmission to LWB.

1.12 Ms HO thanked members for their views which would be duly considered in the consultation exercise.

Item 2: 2016 Policy Address - Policy Initiatives Relating to Women's Development

2.1 With the aid of a powerpoint presentation, PSLW briefed Members on the key initiatives concerning women's development in the 2016 Policy Address.

2.2 The Chairperson thanked PSLW for the briefing and said that WoC had been offering advice to the Government on the gender mainstreaming and was pleased to note that the

application of gender mainstreaming would be further extended to the NGOs in the welfare sector.

2.3 A Member said that while noting the increase in child care places, the demand for child care services (especially for children aged 2-3) was still acute. The Government should continue to address the demand for child care services. Moreover, she suggested if the relevant fees for the children with special needs (even in not “serious” cases) could also be waived.

2.4 To promote women employment and release more parents (in particular women) to join the workforce, a Member suggested that Employees Retraining Board should provide more child care training with recognised qualifications. Also, she suggested that the “Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project” should be regularised as an employment scheme and the allowance of the helpers should be raised.

2.5 Regarding the after-school services for primary school students, a Member asked about the latest status of the “After-school Learning Support Partnership Pilot Scheme” run by the Education Bureau (EDB) and whether such service

would be taken over by LWB.

2.6 For the child care services, PSLW said that LWB was concerned about the inadequate supply for child care places for children aged 2-3 in certain districts. LWB would encourage NGOs to find suitable premises to provide such service. A couple of NGOs participating in the “Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses” had also indicated their willingness to provide child care centres in their projects.

2.7 To take a holistic view on child care services, the Government would commission a consultancy study on the long-term development of child care services in 2016. It was hoped that the consultancy study would shed light on the overall demand and supply, and recommend the way forward. The relevant stakeholders, kindergartens operators, parents and WoC would be consulted in due course. PSLW said that the consultancy would cover the “Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project”, among other child care services.

2.8 As to children with special needs, PSLW said that the Government had recently implemented the “Pilot Scheme on

On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services”. This was administered by the Social Welfare Department but input from the Education Bureau (EDB) and Food and Health Bureau had been enlisted in the design and assessment of proposals stages.

2.9 The meeting noted that EDB was working on an “After-school Learning Support Partnership Pilot Scheme”. The Chairperson asked the Secretariat to follow up with EDB on the progress of such Pilot Scheme.

[Post-meeting note: EDB advised that the “After-school Learning Support Partnership Pilot Scheme” was a time-limited pilot scheme which would be wrapped up by the end of the current 2015-16 school year. All participating schools had been duly informed at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year.]

Item 3: Confirmation of Minutes of the 81st and Special Meeting (WoC 22/15 and WoC 23/15)

3.1 The minutes of the 81st and Special Meeting were confirmed without amendments.

Item 4: Verbal Report by Working Groups

4.1 The Meeting noted the verbal reports made by the co-convenors of respective working groups.

Item 5: Secretary's Report (WoC 01/16)

5.1 The Meeting noted the Secretary's Report.

Item 6: Any Other Business

6.1 PAS(W)2 reported that the WoC Conference 2016 had been scheduled for 11 and 12 December 2016 at Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. There would be pre-conference activities on 11 December 2016 and full-day conference on 12 December 2016. Members were invited to reserve their time for the conference.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

**Women's Commission Secretariat
March 2016**