



## 4 Women's Commission Conference

### Conference Overview

#### INSPIRATION

Building an idea

Sharpening a

viewpoint

Thoughts fly ahead

On the spring breeze

The Commission hosted its first major conference, “Women for a Better Tomorrow,” on 10-11 May 2002 at Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The conference comprised informal networking, plenary and breakout sessions.

Its objectives were:

- to generate discussion and explore ideas on the Commission's three priority areas of work: gender mainstreaming, empowerment of women and public education
- to create opportunities for an exchange of experience, expertise, knowledge and opinions between local women's organisations and international gender experts
- to encourage collaboration among local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government, community groups and businesses with a view to developing a co-operative model to further address women's concerns
- to broaden community members' perspectives on issues concerning their own and others' lives

More than 500 participants attended the conference, which was opened by the Chief Executive. Experts on gender and women-related issues from Mainland China and overseas, and local professionals, shared their ideas and experiences in promoting women's well-being and more than 30 NGOs took part in the conference's “Marketplace”, which showcased their work. Women's groups, service organisations and government departments organised over 70 community activities with a women's focus around the time of the conference. There was no fee for conference participants and a crèche with educational programmes for children was provided to help mothers attend.



## Conference At a Glance

*“Women perform equally well with men on both educational attainment and intelligence if they are given a fair chance and an equal opportunity. We must make full use of the opportunity of the advent of the community, men and women alike, to collaborate with the Commission in the quest for a better tomorrow for women.”*

***Excerpt from Opening Remarks by the Chief Executive***

### *Opening Ceremony*

The Honourable TUNG Chee-hwa (Chief Executive) officiated at the opening ceremony. Ms HUA Fuzhou (Vice-President of All-China Women's Federation (ACWF)) gave an address on behalf of Ms GU Xiulian (then Vice-President of ACWF) on advances made in promoting women's interests and well-being in Mainland China and Dr Linda MIRANDA (Regional Programme Director, East and Southeast Asia Regional Office of United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) delivered a keynote speech on “The Challenges of Transformation – Women's Role For a Better Tomorrow”.

### *Informal Networking Sessions*

- **Gender Mainstreaming:** Prof Vivienne WEE facilitated the discussion on “Gender Mainstreaming Experience Across Sectors”. Panellists Ms Helene DWYER-RENAUD (Director of Gender-Based Analysis, Status of Women Canada), Ms CHAN May-ling (Programme Director, Oxfam Hong Kong) and Ms Alice CHIN (Managing Director, Merck Sharp and Dohme (Asia) Ltd) shared their experiences in adopting gender mainstreaming or gender-sensitive measures.
- **Empowerment of Women:** Panellists Dr LEUNG Tung-yeung (Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Well Women Clinic), Ms Irene NG (Association Concerning Sexual

Violence Against Women), Ms CHAN Yu (Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres), Ms WU Mei-lin (Hong Kong Women Workers' Association) and Ms IP Shun-hing (Hong Kong Women Development Association) spoke on "Women's Health", "Women's Safety at Home and in Public", "Women's Education", "Women's Economic Well-Being" and "Women's Political and Social Participation" respectively. They gave examples of empowerment practices or shared personal experiences.

- **Public Education:** Panellists Ms Theresa CHAN (Principal, Ng Wah College), Ms Maggie KOONG (Principal, Causeway Bay Victoria Kindergarten), Ir Dr HUI Ming-fong (Parent-Teacher Association, Victoria English Primary School), Mrs Mary LEUNG (Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service) and Miss Jolie CHOW (St Paul's Convent School) shared their experiences in "Gender Roles in School Education". Topics included gender roles and the removal of gender stereotyping in education, for example, gender equality in early childhood programmes.

### *Plenary Sessions*

- **Gender Mainstreaming:** Ms Helene DWYER-RENAUD (Director of Gender-Based Analysis, Status of Women Canada) talked about "Gender-Based Analysis in Government Processes" with reference to Canada. She elaborated on the key building blocks and players that facilitate integration of successful gender-based analysis within government.
- **Empowerment of Women:** Dr Patricia LICUANAN (former Chair of United Nations Commission on the Status of Women) gave a speech on "Monitoring Women's Empowerment". Ms ZOU Xiaoqiao (Deputy Director-General of the International Liaison Department, ACWF) spoke on "Women's Empowerment and Enhancement of Women's Competence in All Aspects of Life" and set out the action undertaken by ACWF.
- **Public Education:** Ms XU Xi (renowned writer) spoke on "Between the Lines of Images of Gender", reviewing images that represented various concepts of women from a global perspective.

### *Breakout Sessions*

Some 20 panellists from NGOs, professional groups, academia, the media and the government spoke at three breakout sessions on gender mainstreaming, empowerment of women and public education. In the gender mainstreaming



session, views on the proposed “Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in Hong Kong” were exchanged. With regard to empowerment of women, issues in relation to “Women’s Health”, “Women’s Safety at Home and in Public”, “Women’s Education”, “Women’s Economic Well-being” and “Women’s Political and Social Participation” were discussed along with possible ways to address them. On public education, panellists Ms Sylvia CHANG (film director), Ms Eileen CHA (radio programme host), Mr Rex WONG (film critic) and Prof Eric MA (School of Journalism and Communication, Chinese University of Hong Kong) discussed the “Portrayal of Women in Popular Culture”. Ms Ann HUI (film director) and Ms Lydia SHUM (artiste) shared their views on changes in conceptions, and misconceptions, about women. “Images of Women in Hong Kong Films”, a short film narrated by Mr Leslie CHEUNG (singer), was also shown, reflecting the portrayal of women in local films from the 1950s to the 1990s.

### *Luncheon and Closing Reception*

*“The establishment of the Women’s Commission is a further demonstration of our commitment to enhancing the status of women in Hong Kong. While the Commission has only a year’s history, its work is starting to have an impact.”*

***Excerpt from Closing Address by the Chief Secretary for Administration***

The Honourable Elsie LEUNG (Secretary for Justice) delivered a luncheon speech on the institutional mechanisms for women’s advancement and approaches for promotion of women’s rights. The Guest of Honour at the closing ceremony at Government House was the Honourable Donald TSANG (Chief Secretary for Administration). He pointed out that promotion of gender equality and women’s advancement had been achieved through the combined efforts of the government and civil society.

### *“Marketplace”*

The conference’s “Marketplace” showcased NGOs’ work in serving women in the community. Around the time of the Conference, women’s groups, service organisations and government departments organised women-focused programmes, including health checks for women, talks, seminars and courses, exhibitions and arts programmes.

### Experts’ Meeting Point

The conference, which was also part of the HKSAR’s 5th anniversary celebrations, provided a good opportunity for the Commission to establish partnerships with women’s groups and other interested parties. It successfully brought together foreign and local experts on gender studies and practitioners from both the public sector and NGOs to share views and experience on the advancement of women in Hong Kong.

*See also, “Women’s Commission Conference” in the “Annex.”*

#### REFLECTION

Is this a passing  
moment

Or a timeless truth

A traditional myth

Or a contemporary  
illusion

A new life is born

When chains are cast  
aside