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(ACE Paper 19/98)

for advice

(Brainstorming Session on SUSDEV 21 held on 9 May 1998)

Study on Sustainable Development for the 21st Century

Information and Consultation Materials

Purpose

1. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is conducting a consultancy Study on Sustainable Development for the 21st Century, or SUSDEV 21 in short. A key requirement of the study is to encourage the widest possible public participation. The purpose of the attached 'Information Kit' is to brief you on SUSDEV 21 and seek your opinions on the subject.
2. This paper briefly explains the relevance of SUSDEV 21 in an international context, describes its origins and states its primary objectives. It then introduces the activities scheduled for raising the public knowledge and awareness of the concept of sustainable development. Finally, it details areas in which your opinions and ideas are sought for input into SUSDEV 21.

International Context

3. The concept of sustainable development was formally adopted by the United Nation Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. At this conference, delegates agreed on a blueprint for the integrated consideration of development and environmental issues for the 21st century, known as Agenda 21.
4. The basic principles and elements of Agenda 21 are respectively detailed in Annex A entitled 'A Summary of the Principles Underlying Agenda 21'; and in Annex B entitled 'The Elements of Agenda 21'.
5. Hong Kong is joining this world movement as a responsible member of the international community. SUSDEV 21 is also a major step in seeking to find more integrated approaches to addressing the socio-economic and environmental needs of Hong Kong.

Origins of SUSDEV 21

6. SUSDEV 21 has its origins in the initial findings of the Territorial Development Strategy (TDS) Review published in 1996. The TDS Review concluded that it would be difficult for the proposed long-term strategy to meet all specified objectives, particularly with respect to those for environmental protection.
7. This conclusion was reinforced in the 1996 (third) review of the White Paper : 'Pollution of Hong Kong - A Time to Act', which set out proposals for incorporating sustainability considerations into development planning and related policy making. The relevant sections of the White Paper are at Annex C.

Objectives and Progress of SUSDEV 21

8. SUSDEV 21 commenced on 1 September 1997 and is targeted for completion before the turn of the century. The objectives of SUSDEV 21 are as follows :
 - (a) define what the term 'sustainability' should mean for Hong Kong;
 - (b) develop guiding values, sustainability indicators and criteria covering the economic, social and environmental objectives of our society;
 - (c) conduct baseline economic, social and environmental studies for Hong Kong, relevant to the aims and objectives of the study;
 - (d) create a 'Sustainable Development System' (SDS), the principal deliverable of the study, which will enable sustainable development issues to be evaluated and integrated into Government decision-making. The SDS will comprise a set of decision support tools and institutional recommendations to facilitate the implementation of sustainable development;
 - (e) identify policy and/or institutional areas that may need to be improved so as to facilitate the taking of decisions relating to sustainable development in a more informed and balanced way; and
 - (f) get the widest possible public participation throughout the study process and bring the attention of the community to the importance of sustainable development.
9. The study has made good progress since its commencement with the following reports having been produced to date :

- (a) an International Review, a summary at Annex D;
- (b) a Review of Development Trends in the Pearl River Delta and Related Trans-boundary Issues, a summary at Annex E;
- (c) a Review of Relevant Completed and Ongoing Studies, a summary at Annex F; and
- (d) a Working Definition of Sustainability, a summary at Annex G.

Public Knowledge and Awareness Enhancement

10. Many of the concepts associated with sustainable development are not well understood by the public of Hong Kong. Consequently, raising the public's understanding and awareness of the meaning and importance of sustainable development is vital to the success of implementing such development in Hong Kong. We need to let members of the public know that, contrary to common belief, development and environment protection need not necessarily be mutually exclusive notions; rather, the goals of improving socio-economic conditions and enhancing environmental well-being can be integrated in our efforts towards sustainable development.
11. For the purpose of informing and increasing the awareness of the general public and specific stakeholder groups about sustainable development and SUSDEV 21, we have arranged the following activities :
 - (a) exhibitions, including a video, at five popular locations;
 - (b) distribution of an Information Digest, a copy of which is included in the attached Information Kit; and
 - (c) a SUSDEV 21 website.
12. More such activities will be organised later in the study process and beyond.

Consultation with Stakeholder Groups

13. In addition to the public awareness enhancement activities, we will undertake extensive consultation with stakeholder groups to seek their views on sustainable development in Hong Kong. In particular, to help develop the SDS, views will be sought on the following two fundamental aspects :
- (a) first, views are needed to help formulate 'Guiding Values' for sustainable development that reflect Hong Kong's unique qualities and challenges. 'Guiding Values' are broad societal objectives which are used to define a certain quality of life for Hong Kong, and which cover the economic, social and environmental issues affecting the community; and
 - (b) second, views are also required to devise the 'Sustainability Indicators' which are parameters, or measures, that can be quantified and used to assess how sustainable a society's activities are over time. This will allow decision-makers to assess the sustainability implications of policies, plans, programmes, resource allocation and the implementation of development projects, and to track progress.

Conclusion

14. Members are invited to express their views on the implementation of sustainable development in Hong Kong. On the aspects mentioned in para. 13 (a) and (b) for which specific views are sought, Members can fill in the 'Feedback Form' contained in the attached Information Kit and send it back to Planning Department. Any written views are also welcome and should be sent to Planning Department before the end of June 1998.

**Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau/Planning Department
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