

**Opening Remark by Secretary for Labour and Welfare at
the Legislative Council Public Accounts Committee's Public Hearing
on the Director of Audit's Report No. 63:
Provision of Long-term Care Services for the Elderly**

Chairman,

I would like to thank the Director of Audit for conducting a review on the Social Welfare Department (SWD)'s provision of long-term care services in the past few months. I would also wish to thank the Public Accounts Committee for selecting this subject for the hearing. Both reflect the community's genuine concern about the challenges arising from the ageing population as well as the development of elderly services.

Like many other economies, Hong Kong is facing an ageing population. The number of elderly people aged 65 or above will increase from around 1.07 million at present to 2.56 million in 2041, representing 32% of our population. Given the rapidly ageing population, the commitment of the whole community to provide care for the elderly will continue to increase in the years ahead.

In view of the challenges posed by the ageing population, our policy priorities are to provide effective services for our senior citizens and map out the long-term plan for the services. For the frail elderly, in line with the policy of promoting "ageing in place as the core, institutional care as back-up", we have allocated substantial resources to provide a wide spectrum of community care services and residential care services with a view to supporting our elderly with various care needs as well as their carers. In parallel, we adopt an innovative approach in introducing pilot projects and exploring the feasibility of new service modes. This aims to promote the diversity of the provision of elderly services with more flexibility and choices to suit the needs of our elderly citizens. The Director of Audit has given a detailed account in his Report of the Government's policies, measures, resources allocation, long-term planning, etc. on elderly care services, and hence I will not recapitulate the details here.

In his Report, the Director of Audit has put forward numerous recommendations on various areas of elderly care services, such as the provision and management of subsidised long-term care services for the elderly. The Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and SWD agree with these recommendations, and our preliminary responses to the recommendations are set out in the Report. We will also follow up the relevant enhancement measures as appropriate. The Chief Executive has tasked the Elderly Commission (EC) to prepare an Elderly Services Programme Plan (Programme Plan) within two years. The EC has set up a working group to follow up relevant work on the Programme Plan, which is expected to be completed in mid-2016. We have forwarded the Audit's Report to the EC for it to take into account as it deems appropriate when formulating the Programme Plan.

I fully appreciate and am grateful to the Public Accounts Committee for its concerns on elderly care, notably the long-term care services for the elderly. My colleagues and I are happy to further supplement in response to Members' questions. Thank you.