

Legislative Council Meeting of 8 September 2021
Motion on “Mending the social rift and fostering social cohesion”

Progress Report

Purpose

At the Legislative Council meeting of 8 September 2021, the motion on “Mending the social rift and fostering social cohesion” moved by Dr Hon Priscilla Leung was passed (full text of the passed motion is at **Annex**). This paper sets out the actions taken by relevant bureaux and departments (B/Ds) in the respective areas.

Latest Progress

Resolving economic and livelihood conflicts

2. Apart from political conflicts, our society is faced with economic and livelihood issues accumulated over the years. Hence, to reduce division in our society and foster social cohesion, one of our priorities is to tackle economic and livelihood issues.

3. Poverty alleviation is one of the policy priorities of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government. The Government has been taking care of those in need by providing a social safety net through income redistribution. The current-term Government has made substantial improvement in cash welfare over the past few years. The relevant total recurrent expenditure has significantly increased by 56% from \$43.1 billion in 2017-18 to \$67.4 billion in 2021-22. According to the statistics released earlier, after taking into account all cash and public rental housing benefits, 1.1 million persons were lifted out of poverty in 2020. The size of the poor population went down to 0.55 million. This shows that our policy measures have been effective in improving the livelihood of the grassroots.

4. In her 2021 Policy Address (PA), the Chief Executive (CE) mapped out the Government's future poverty alleviation strategies. These include continuing to lift needy elderly out of poverty by providing cash welfare, with the plan to merge the Normal and Higher Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) in the second half of 2022, so that the more lenient asset limits of the Normal OALA will be adopted across-the-board, and that eligible applicants will receive payment at the Higher OALA rate; continuing to develop our economy, provide training and retraining, encourage employment and provide financial support for working households with lower income, particularly those with children, through the Working Family Allowance Scheme; speeding up public rental housing (PRH) construction, building more transitional housing, and providing cash allowances to eligible PRH applicants who have been waiting for PRH for more than three years; strengthening retirement protection under the Mandatory Provident Fund under the principle of shared responsibility. The Government will continue to alleviate poverty and support the underprivileged.

5. On labour welfare, the statutory maternity leave has been extended from 10 weeks to 14 weeks with Government reimbursing the pay of additional weeks; and five-day statutory paternity leave has been implemented. We have also improved the employment terms of non-skilled workers of government service contractors; and enacted legislation to bring the number of statutory holidays from 12 days at present on par with that of general holidays of 17 days progressively.

6. Apart from social welfare, housing is one of the important issues currently faced by society. The Government has all along been striving to help more households in Hong Kong meet their housing goals through efforts like increasing housing (especially public housing) supply, enriching the housing ladder, optimising the use of public housing resources and maintaining healthy development of the private residential property market.

7. The Government has identified about 350 hectares of land which can produce some 330 000 public housing units in the coming 10-year period (i.e. from 2022-23 to 2031-32). This can meet the estimated public housing demand of around 301 000 units in the 10-year period concerned. The

Government will provide the details in the Long Term Housing Strategy Annual Progress Report 2021 to be published at the end of this year.

8. To ensure that subsidised sale flats are affordable to the target households, the pricing mechanism was revised in 2018 such that Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) flats are priced at an affordable level which is delinked from market prices of private housing. The Hong Kong Housing Authority has regularised the Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme and White Form Secondary Market Scheme. Moreover, the Government has introduced Starter Homes for Hong Kong Residents pilot projects to meet the home ownership aspirations of higher-income families who are not eligible for the HOS and yet cannot afford private housing.

9. As for private housing, maintaining the healthy development of the private residential property market is one of the important objectives of the Government's housing policies. The Government has continued to adopt a two-pronged approach by striving to increase both land and housing supply to meet demand, and adopting demand-side management measures to stabilise the residential property market. The Government will, as always, continue to keep in view the conditions of the residential property market and take timely and appropriate measures in response to market changes by making reference to relevant indicators.

10. In addition, the Government has introduced three ground-breaking measures in recent years to improve the living conditions of families living in inadequate housing. They include spearheading transitional housing projects, launching the Cash Allowance Trial Scheme and legislating for tenancy control of subdivided units.

Building a society that has a sense of national identity, law-abidingness and mutual respect

11. At the same time, we need to cultivate our society with a sense of national identity, law-abidingness and mutual respect. Citizens should understand and cherish the advantages and value of Hong Kong, and have a more in-depth knowledge of the country, "One Country, Two Systems" as well

as the constitutional basis formed by the Constitution and the Basic Law together.

12. The Constitution and the Basic Law provide the strongest safeguard for the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. To ensure that the “One Country, Two Systems” principle is fully and accurately implemented, we must adhere to the Constitution and the Basic Law. To ensure the steadfast and successful implementation of “One Country, Two Systems”, we have to continue to enhance publicity and education so that the general public can have an accurate understanding of the Constitution, the Basic Law and “One Country, Two Systems”. To this end, the Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee and its five working groups have been taking forward publicity and education efforts on the Constitution and the Basic Law through diversified approaches, with a view to promoting and strengthening the atmosphere of studying and learning the Constitution and the Basic Law in the community. They include making full use of electronic media and online platforms (e.g. thematic webinars, and online workshops to be rolled out), continuing to organise physical mobile promotion activities at district and school levels, sponsoring non-governmental organisations or community organisations for staging various promotional activities on the Constitution and the Basic Law and conducting research on the promotion of the Basic Law, etc.

13. The Home Affairs Bureau will continue to work closely with the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE) to promote civic and national education (including national security, the Constitution, the Basic Law and “One Country, Two Systems”, and core civic values, etc.) outside schools and in the community through various channels and projects, such as producing short videos and publications or organising exhibitions/talks on relevant themes; disseminating information through the CPCE’s website and social media pages; and launching promotion activities in the Civic Education Resource Centre.

14. Regarding school education, the Education Bureau (EDB) has all along been adopting a “multi-pronged and co-ordinated” approach in promoting national education (including the Constitution, the Basic Law and national security education) within and beyond classroom training to cultivate students’ sense of national identity, law-abidingness and respect for others. We aim to enrich students’ learning experiences in a holistic manner and strengthen their sense of national identity. Strategies adopted include curriculum enrichment, provision of training for teachers, development of learning and teaching resources, and organisation of student learning activities.

15. Since the 2018/19 school year, Chinese History has become an independent compulsory subject at the junior secondary level. EDB has also promulgated the *Curriculum Framework of National Security Education in Hong Kong* and the national security education frameworks for 15 subjects. Meanwhile, EDB has recommended a set of priority values and attitudes that should be taught in primary and secondary schools. They include “perseverance”, “respect for others”, “responsibility”, “national identity”, “commitment”, “integrity”, “care for others”, “law-abidingness” and “empathy”. It has been operating a web-based resource platform “National Education One-stop Portal” since August 2021, which covers various resources on the Constitution, the Basic Law and national security education, the national symbols (including the National Flag, National Emblem and National Anthem), Chinese history and Chinese culture and museum learning. Further, EDB has been organising diversified learning activities for students and launched the “Basic Law Student Ambassadors Training Scheme” in 2020. Through talks, service learning, visits/Mainland exchange, etc., we aim to deepen students’ understanding of the Constitution and the Basic Law, encourage them to attend to the affairs of our country and Hong Kong actively as well as to share their learning outcome with their peers. In recent years, EDB has organised the signature event “My Pledge to Act” with the theme “Be grateful and treasure what we have, stay positive and optimistic”. This is conducive to the cultivation of an atmosphere for nurturing a sense of belonging towards our country, law-abidingness and respect for others, so that students can understand and cherish the strengths of Hong Kong and develop positive values. In the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years, 610 and 521 schools launched the related learning activities respectively.

16. EDB has been strengthening the professional training for teachers and school leaders. Starting from the 2020/21 school year, contents relating to the Constitution, the Basic Law and national security are featured in the core training for newly-recruited teachers, serving teachers and teachers aspiring for promotion. The training programmes for school principals, school supervisors and school managers have also been similarly enhanced. Besides, mainland study tours would be arranged as part of core training for newly-recruited teachers and teachers aspiring for promotion, having regard to the development of the epidemic situation. The tours include school visits, thematic seminars as well as visits to enterprises and cultural sites. We aim to enhance teachers' understanding of the latest national development and widen their horizons through their personal observations and experiences in these tour activities. This will enable them to think deeper about the relations between Hong Kong and the Mainland, its relation to the world, as well as the opportunities brought to Hong Kong by the development of our country and how Hong Kong can contribute.

17. EDB encourages post-secondary institutions to help students develop a full and accurate understanding of the Basic Law and “One Country, Two Systems” to boost their sense of national identity. Various universities organise a wide array of public talks, seminars and workshops on the Basic Law, governance and politics, and national education. Many institutions also offer related general education and inter-disciplinary courses to enhance students' understanding of the Basic Law. Universities may continue to make full use of their resources to promote, teach and research into such topics as the Basic Law and “One Country, Two Systems”. At the same time, under the principle of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, we are in communication with the institutions to support them in fulfilling their legal obligations to safeguard national security, including incorporating national security education in their curriculum and introducing enhanced measures in campus management.

18. To safeguard a law-abiding society, the Personal Data (Privacy) (Amendment) Bill 2021, which aims to combat rampant doxxing acts that caused social division, was passed by the Legislative Council on 29 September 2021. It subsequently came into effect on 8 October 2021. Since 2019, doxxers have attacked those of different political stance through the

indiscriminate disclosure of their personal data. This, in essence, has weaponised personal data. The legislative amendments criminalise doxxing acts. They also confer on the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data statutory powers to issue cessation notices demanding the cessation or restriction of disclosure of doxxing content, conduct criminal investigation and institute prosecution for doxxing cases to strengthen enforcement against doxxing cases.

Enhancing communication with the public and attaching importance to youth development

19. On the other hand, the current-term Government is committed to enhancing communication with the public and introducing various measures to help our youths develop their full potentials. We attach importance to youth development and provision of opportunities for upward mobility for the younger generation. We care about young people's education, career pursuit and home ownership. We encourage their participation in politics as well as public policy discussion and debate. We also endeavour to help our young people adopt a positive approach to life and develop a commitment to society, a sense of national identity, a love for Hong Kong and an international perspective. In April 2018, the current-term Government established the Youth Development Commission (YDC), chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, to oversee the formulation and co-ordination of youth-related policies and steer B/Ds on the implementation of relevant initiatives. Since its establishment, YDC has been promoting cross-bureau and inter-departmental collaboration in rolling out various initiatives to respond to young people's needs.

20. To strengthen communication with young people, YDC has arranged online policy thematic meetings since last year to invite relevant policy bureaux, YDC members and young people to engage in focused discussions on relevant topics and policies of specific policy areas, particularly those in relation to young people's concerns about education, career pursuit, home ownership as well as participation in politics and policy discussion and debate. At the past three online thematic meetings, YDC discussed youth employment, multiple pathways other than employment and nurturing young people's positive thinking. The Government and YDC listening to young

people's views directly through these meetings would help the Government's implementation of policy measures in future. Subject to the development of the epidemic, YDC will continue to serve as a bridge to strengthen communication with young people through various online and physical channels.

21. To facilitate young people's career development and promote their upward mobility, YDC has rolled out the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Entrepreneurship Scheme) and the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the Experiential Scheme) under the Youth Development Fund. These measures help Hong Kong young people utilise the entrepreneurial bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and help them develop their businesses in both Hong Kong and Mainland cities of the GBA. The two funding schemes were well received by various sectors of the community and more than 40 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Hong Kong submitted their funding applications. About \$130 million under the Entrepreneurship Scheme was granted for 16 NGOs to implement youth entrepreneurship projects. It is estimated that subsidies will be provided for around 230 youth start-ups (involving more than 800 Hong Kong young entrepreneurs) while entrepreneurial support and incubation services will be rendered to about 4 000 young people. As for the Experiential Scheme, about \$5 million was granted for 15 NGOs to organise short-term experiential projects at the entrepreneurial bases in Mainland cities of the GBA, benefitting around 700 young people. Moreover, YDC provides exchange and internship opportunities outside Hong Kong to our young people in an effort to broaden their horizons while giving them exposure to actual workplace environment. YDC will continue to introduce enhancement measures to the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland, the Funding Scheme for Youth Exchange in the Mainland and the Funding Scheme for International Youth Exchange to better cater to the needs of young people. Subject to the development of the pandemic, YDC will continue to enhance and expand the schemes concerned in the future.

22. At the same time, the Government puts emphasis on nurturing young people's positive thinking and positive values. We will establish effective channels to enable their ideals and passion to become a constructive force for community building. In the summer of 2021, YDC visited various activities intended to nurture young people's positive thinking. An online policy thematic meeting was organised in September 2021 for focused discussion on the topic. Looking ahead, YDC will actively follow up on the CE's invitation in her 2021 PA to explore new funding initiatives to subsidise NGOs to organise projects that are conducive to nurturing young people's positive thinking, particularly those which involve cross-sectoral efforts or are youth-led and could drive community building.

23. Besides youth work, the Government would canvass a wider spectrum of district views, strengthen communication and actively address matters of daily concern to the public when handling district affairs. B/Ds would consider consulting the local community through various channels as necessary, such as engaging local/sectoral stakeholders and committees. The Home Affairs Department (HAD) has all along been working on community building, promoting community involvement activities and encouraging public participation in community affairs. HAD seeks to meet district needs by continuing to encourage public participation in community affairs and activities, liaise with community and district-based organisations, liaise with rural communities, coordinate major celebration activities, implement the community involvement programme projects and various other measures. These help enable district residents participate in various festive and celebratory, cultural and recreational, district sports, greening and volunteer activities, etc., to improve social harmony.

Seizing opportunities arising from national development

24. To propel the Hong Kong society to move forward in a concerted manner, we need to capitalise on our unique position under "One Country, Two Systems" to better integrate into the growth of our country and grasp the ample opportunities so arisen, particularly under the National 14th Five-Year Plan, the development of the GBA as well as the Belt and Road Initiative (B&RI).

25. The 14th Five-Year Plan establishes a clear positioning for Hong Kong's future development, covering three major development directions from political, economic and social perspectives. In addition to maintaining the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, the 14th Five-Year Plan supports Hong Kong in consolidating and enhancing its competitive advantages for better integration into the overall development of our country. Under the new development pattern of our country featuring dual circulation which takes the domestic market as the mainstay while enabling the domestic and international markets to interact positively with each other, and with the support of the 14th Five-Year Plan, Hong Kong will leverage on its advantages as a highly market-oriented and an international economy underpinned by the rule of law to proactively become a “participant” in domestic circulation and a “facilitator” in international circulation. We will also take the GBA development as the best entry point to better integrate into the overall development of our country.

26. To facilitate members of the public to have a more in-depth understanding on the 14th Five-Year Plan, the HKSAR Government is producing a television programme to introduce the positioning of Hong Kong under the 14th Five-Year Plan as well as the opportunities and facilitation measures for Hong Kong brought about by the 14th Five-Year Plan, with a view to encouraging various sectors and the public to actively participate in and capitalise on the opportunities of integrating into the overall development of our country.

27. The development of the GBA is a key national development strategy in the country's reform and opening up for a new era, as well as a further step in enriching the implementation of “One Country, Two Systems”. The objectives of the development of the GBA are to further deepen cooperation amongst Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao to promote coordinated economic development in the GBA, leverage the complementary advantages of the three places, and develop an international first-class bay area ideal for living, working and travelling.

28. The vast majority of the 24 measures announced after the two meetings of the Leading Group for the Development of the GBA in 2019 have been implemented. These include tax concessions, facilitation of property purchase, support for young entrepreneurs, cross-boundary remittance of science and technology funding, liberalisation of the legal, insurance and construction-related professional services, use of Hong Kong-registered drugs and common medical devices in designated Hong Kong-owned healthcare institutions in the GBA, and the Cross-Boundary Wealth Management Connect Scheme, etc. Not only do these policy measures bring more development opportunities in the Mainland cities of the GBA to Hong Kong enterprises, but they also provide significantly greater convenience to Hong Kong residents and professionals seeking to live, work or start businesses in the Mainland cities of the GBA.

29. The HKSAR Government has been taking forward the development of the GBA proactively on all fronts with noticeable achievements. In particular, the HKSAR Government has been collaborating with the Shenzhen Municipal Government to jointly develop the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Cooperation Zone which comprises the Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Zone and the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park, with a view to establishing “one zone, two parks”. On financial services, the Cross-Boundary Wealth Management Connect Scheme was officially launched on 10 September 2021. It expands the cross-boundary investment channel for residents in the GBA and strengthens Hong Kong’s role as an international asset and management centre and important gateway for capital flowing into and out of the Mainland. On professional services, eligible solicitors and barristers in Hong Kong may provide legal service in the nine Mainland cities (including Shenzhen) of the GBA after passing the GBA Legal Professional Examination and obtaining a lawyer’s practice certificate. On architectural and related engineering professional services, eligible consultants, contractors and professionals in Hong Kong may provide service in the GBA after obtaining equivalent qualifications on the Mainland through a registration system. At present, this arrangement covers five professional sectors, namely architecture, engineering, surveying, planning and landscape architecture.

30. The Central Authorities promulgated the Plan for Comprehensive Deepening Reform and Opening Up of the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone (the Qianhai Plan) on 6 September 2021. The Qianhai Plan has once again demonstrated the country's key strategic planning to elevate the level of cooperation amongst Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, enrich the implementation of "One Country, Two Systems", as well as deepen reform and expand the scope of opening up through GBA development. Using modern service industries as an entry point, cooperation between Guangdong and Hong Kong, as well as between Hong Kong and Shenzhen can be enhanced. Not only will the Qianhai Plan give full play to Hong Kong's long-held advantages in high-end professional services, but the enhancement of the functions of the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone will also facilitate the further development of Hong Kong's professional services in the longer term. The HKSAR Government will continue to pursue more liberalisation measures and favourable conditions for Hong Kong enterprises to enter the Mainland market under the framework of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA).

31. Looking ahead, the development of the GBA will provide vital support to Hong Kong's economy. With our country's development strategy of domestic and international dual circulation and the development opportunities brought about by the 14th Five-Year National Plan, Hong Kong will make the best use of our institutional strengths under "One Country, Two Systems" and our internationalised business environment that is highly market-oriented and underpinned by the rule of law. We will continue to follow the principles set out in the Outline Development Plan for the GBA, play our role of "leveraging Hong Kong's advantages and meeting the country's needs" and proactively integrate into the development of the country. We will also leverage Hong Kong's position as the functional platform and a key link for the B&RI, and encourage the community to seize related opportunities, including by promoting external trade and by organising the annual Belt and Road Summit¹ in Hong Kong, etc. The developments of Hong Kong and our country are closely related. Only by leveraging the Central Government's

¹ The Summit is renowned as the largest and most important Belt and Road business and investment platform for Mainland, overseas and Hong Kong enterprises and six editions have been held so far.

policies in support of Hong Kong can we give full play to our unique strengths, which will in turn bring continuous impetus to our economy.

Conclusion

32. The Government will continue to adopt an open mind and listen to the views and suggestions from different sectors of society. We will spare no efforts in resolving economic and livelihood issues and continuously promoting Hong Kong's economic and social development.

Chief Secretary for Administration's Office
Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
Education Bureau
Home Affairs Bureau
Labour and Welfare Bureau
Transport and Housing Bureau
December 2021

(Translation)

Council meeting of 8 September 2021

**Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG's motion on
"Mending the social rift and fostering social cohesion"**

Wording of the Motion

That the enactment of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Improving Electoral System (Consolidated Amendments) Bill 2021 has quickly restored stability in Hong Kong society and also brought unlimited opportunities for Hong Kong's future development; however, the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments in 2019 have plunged Hong Kong into a serious political rift, with many social problems remaining to be resolved, including that many people, organizations and business operators supporting the Government and law enforcement by the Police have been subjected to boycotts, doxxing, criminal intimidation and even assaults; people arrested for breaking the law under the influence of radical ideas are yet to receive rehabilitation education and reintegrate into society, among whom thousands are students and minors; many family members, neighbours in the community or work partners have turned against each other because of differences in political views; to resolve the social conflicts, it is necessary to not only resolve political and livelihood issues, but also untie the emotional knots in society, so this Council urges the Government to mend the social rift, foster social cohesion and promote restoration of social harmony such that Hong Kong can restore the spirit of agreeing to disagree and seeking common ground while reserving differences, reunite as one, and focus its efforts on seizing the opportunities from the Outline of the National 14th Five-Year Plan, the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the 'Belt and Road' Initiative, thereby contributing to the development of the country.