

## Family Council

### Information Paper on Discussion of the Establishment of the Family Council by the Legislative Council Panel on Welfare Services

#### Purpose

This paper reports to Members the major issues raised at the meeting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Welfare Services on 14 February 2008.

#### Background

3. The LegCo Panel on Welfare Services discussed the establishment of the Family Council at its meeting on 14 February 2008. The Family Council Secretary also attended the meeting at the invitation of the Panel. 15 non-government organizations (NGOs) at **Annex A** joined the meeting and their submissions are at **Annex B**. Relevant extracts of the draft minutes of the Panel meeting are at **Annex C**.

#### Major Issues

4. The Panel and NGOs expressed the following key points on the priority issues and future work plan of the Family Council –
- (a) NGOs and many Panel Members urged the Government to retain the existing three commissions, namely the Women's Commission, the Elderly Commission and the Commission on Youth which could then continue to advise the Administration on matters concerning the interests of individuals/groups belonging to particular age/gender groups but not directly related to the family;
  - (b) A Children's Commission should be established to oversee issues related to the development of children;

- (c) The Family Council should expedite formulation and incorporation of a “Family Impact Assessment” in the policy-making process so as to ensure better protection of the well-being of families in the public policies;
- (d) The special needs of individual family members, in particular the children, the disabled and their caretakers, should be duly considered in the course of fostering a family perspective among the policy-makers; and
- (e) The Family Council should map out more concrete work targets and action plan.

5. The NGOs and Panel Members also commented on the modus operandi of the Family Council. They requested the Family Council to provide its discussion papers and minutes of meetings to the Panel to keep it abreast of the work progress. The Panel also invited the Chief Secretary for Administration and Members of the Family Council to report progress of work to the Panel in April / May this year.

6. In response to the above comments, the Family Council Secretary made the following points at the Panel meeting –

- (a) The Family Council will explore ways to achieve more collaboration between the Council and the Elderly Commission, the Women's Commission and the Commission on Youth, with a view to meeting our target of rationalizing the work of the commissions under the Council by March 2009;
- (b) The Government has no plan to set up additional independent commission for individual age or sex groups, including a children's commission;
- (c) The immediate priority issues to be considered by the Family Council include identification of core family values; ways to create a pro-family environment including work environment; ways to enhance family education; and ways to foster a family perspective among policy makers;

(d) Agreed to convey the views expressed by NGOs and the Panel to the Family Council for its consideration.

### **Advice Sought**

7. Members are invited to **note** the views expressed at the Panel meeting.

**Secretariat, Family Council**  
**March 2008**

**List of deputations attended the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Welfare Services  
on 14 February 2008**

1. Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children
2. Against Child Abuse
3. Hong Kong College of Paediatricians
4. Society for Community Organization
5. The Hong Kong Council of Social Service
6. The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong
7. Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights
8. The Against Elderly Abuse of Hong Kong
9. Caritas – Hong Kong (Family Service)
10. Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF
11. The Association for the Advancement of Feminism
12. Hong Kong Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities
13. Hong Kong Association for the Survivors of Women Abuse (Kwan Fook)
14. 殘障人士及照顧者關注組
15. 1<sup>st</sup> Step Association

**Hong Kong College of Paediatricians**  
**Submission to the Panel on Welfare Services of the Legislative Council**  
**on the Establishment of the Family Council**  
**14 February 2008**

The Chief Executive's 2006-07 Policy Address announced that there was to be a study on the set up of a Family Commission to be ready in mid-2007. To date, the study has yet to be made public so that the considerations behind the final decision to establish a Family Council in December 2007 is unclear. Never-the-less, the Hong Kong College of Paediatricians supports fully the Government's intention for the Council to strengthen families and build a more caring and harmonious society.

Long before the set up of this Family Council, the Government accorded special attention to certain vulnerable groups with the establishment of the Commission on Youth in 1990, the Elderly Commission in 1997 and the Women's Commission in 2001. Within our society, one of the most vulnerable groups amongst all ages are in fact children who are unable to speak for themselves and who do not have the power to vote. The international community, bearing in mind "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care" saw the need for a separate convention to address specifically the rights of the child. Our own Legislative Council also unanimously passed a motion on 8<sup>th</sup> June last year urging the Government to fulfill her obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to set up a Commission on Children. The 2006-07 Policy Address did say "dedicated groups would be set up to oversee specific sectors as need arises" in this new entity focusing on the family. While the non-official members of the Family Council were appointed in their personal capacity, in fact its membership encompasses the chairpersons of the Commission on Youth, the Elderly and the Women's Commissions. There is no such representation from a similar body that speaks for all the children in Hong Kong, a sector that accounts for 1 in 5 of our population.

As outlined in the paper provided by the administration in the present discussion, indeed, "the root of many complicated social problems often lies at home" but these problems do not only need to be tackled from "the family perspective" but also from that of the individual members especially the children whose views are easy to overlook and whose interests often overshadowed by that of the adults. The continuous media reports of serious mishaps afflicting children bear witness to our concerns that families are not necessarily safe havens for children. Most physical and sexual abuse of children occur at home. Children at tender ages suffer neglect at home as well when they are left to fend for themselves while their parents are away attending to their gambling and other interests. Children's lives are being ended prematurely from their unwittingly climbing out of windows or being thrown out of high-rise buildings. Children as young as 9 are taking their own lives while others die from their parents' extended suicide. Attending to children's individual interest in the family is so important that in some countries when reports of domestic violence are being investigated, instead of "one social worker one family", a child advocate join hands with an adult advocate during the outreach to ensure the children's interests are protected. While we appreciate adults have rights, for example, to work, we also need to protect the children's right to proper attention and care. Hence when the Family Council identifies core family values and family policies, voices for children and children's voices are essential.

That Commissions for Youth, the Elderly or Women did not simply disappear with the formation of the Family Council speaks for the fact that there are many issues related to these population groups that involve matters outside the family. In relation to children left unattended, while it is important for working parents to have affordable alternate childcare, it does not make sense to have more and more children in longer and longer hours of extended out-of-home care. The situation that needs to be rectified is the meagre wages earned by the parents so that they do not have to work undue long hours in multiple employments in order to make ends meet. Children need protection in and out of the boundaries of the family as well. How well some legislations in Hong Kong protect children can be gauged by the media report a fortnight ago that a convicted paedophile preferred Hong Kong to his home country as his place of residence after he served his sentence for child molestation in a foreign land.

We should not be misled by Hong Kong's low infant mortality and long life expectancy into a state of complacency. Many of our adults' chronic ill health comes from unhealthy life styles acquired in the young and our youth problems originate from their adverse experiences in early childhood. When the Government identified one of the major roles of the Family Council as rationalizing the work of the Elderly Commission, the Women's Commission and the Commission on Youth, before all memberships end in March 2009, we hope that during the coming 14 months the Council will ensure that children's interests will be given due consideration in considering the future direction and structure of the Council. We also expect a high degree of transparency during this process in the setting of agendas for the Council, the Council's deliberations and decision-making as in other Government appointed advisory committees.

香港社會服務聯會  
交立法會福利事務委員會會議  
討論「設立家庭議會」  
(2008年2月14日)

本會致力倡議成立高層次的中央家庭事務委員會，欣見政府決心成立「家庭議會」。我們期望在政務司司長帶領下能促成跨政策局及政府部門的合作，主動研究香港家庭狀況，制訂適切的政策、協調資源以支援有關服務的發展、跟進及監察各局及部門落實的情況，致力鞏固家庭的正面價值觀與功能，促進和諧家庭關係，為家庭謀福祉。

### 目的

家庭是社會上最基本的單元，為成員提供安全的庇護、愛與關顧，給予家人安全感，是培育自尊、責任感及滿足感的源頭。現時，家庭的形態不一，例如：單親、再婚、跨境、同居、一孩、核心及跨代家庭等等。「家庭議會」應尊重不同形態的家庭面貌，支援家庭發揮其功能為首要目的；推動家庭和諧的政策，凝造家庭友善的工作、經濟及政治環境，為特別需要或弱勢家庭提供所需的支援與服務。「議會」除了深入研究香港家庭狀況外，亦要制訂政策目標和對各項重大政策進行家庭影響評估。

### 優先處理項目

本會建議「家庭議會」於本年舉行家庭高峰會，以「家庭為本」的角度，討論家庭核心責任與功能，同時研究經濟、就業、房屋、教育、醫療、法制、入境及社福政策、資源與服務的設計，優先回應：

#### (1) 推動家庭友善就業措施

鼓勵僱主建立關心員工家庭生活的文化，提供彈性上班時間、五天工作、職位共享(半職或兼職)、男士侍產假、職場托兒、輔導服務及在職場提供家庭生活培育課程。政府也需考慮設定工時及工資的保障。

#### (2) 支援家長與育兒教育

全面規劃家庭教育的工作，從正規教育課程內全面規劃家庭價值觀培立，包括自我認識、兩性角色及相處、性教育、拍拖、成立家庭等責任，也需與學童及青少年討論家庭模式多元化的情況。

政府也需有系統及主動地給予資源，提供一系列家庭支援及教育服務，在家庭成長的重要階段給予指引，如結婚、生育、入學、青少年期、空巢期，以至離婚、再婚等。針對特殊情況也需給予特別支援，例如：未婚懷孕、年少家長、吸毒父母等。

### (3) 支援中港跨境家庭：

設立專責小組與內地協作，討論加強及支援跨境(尤其深港)家庭的可行措施。

### (4) 預防及打擊家庭暴力；及

協調社區、教育、執法、司法的工作，並提供資源以改善及定立一系列預防及打擊家庭暴力和支援受害人的工作。

### (5) 進行香港家庭及婚姻狀況與需要研究

政府需帶動更多有關的研究，以提供實證及資料，作為設立改善政策與服務的依據。研究課題包括家庭與婚姻在不同階段的需要與挑戰、婚姻與家庭滿足指標、婚姻關係對兒童成長的影響、幼兒健康發展的核心要素、單親及再婚家庭的家庭功能、跨境婚姻與家庭的需要等。有些研究是需要定期進行，以比較家庭發展趨勢，例如港人的家庭價值觀。

「家庭議會」也需啓動研究及製定社會政策「家庭影響評估」(Family Impact Assessment)，為香港社會提供一套檢討工具，研究社會政策是否有利家庭成員履行核心責任、是否影響某家庭組群的生活、是否照顧到有特別需要的家庭，以及有否為所有家庭提供選擇。

### 與其他委員會 / 諮詢委員會的關係

「家庭議會」必須與現時多個專責委員會接軌和作出協調，而非取代現有的婦女事務、安老事務、青年事務及康復諮詢等委員會。因為各社會事務委員會均有著特定的探討議題，有關的委員會能提供平台鼓勵更多的社會及公民參。而且有些專門的議題，都並不能單純地以鞏固家庭的手段解決的。例如：推動性別敏銳性、人口老化問題、老年及婦女貧窮、退休保障、長期照顧系統、院舍服務等。政府必須聽取各方意見，釐清「家庭議會」與其他委員會的工作，要能務實地處理問題，也要有遠景地規劃各項社會政策，做到「以家為本」。

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**Submission to Welfare Services Panel of the Legislative Council**

**Our views on the Family Council**

The **Alliance for Children's Commission** is formed by 25 agencies and professional groups, which have committed ourselves to promote the establishment of a Children's Commission in Hong Kong. While we are seeking to represent the interests of children, we also agreed that family harmony is the cornerstone of social harmony. We welcome a Family Council to support and strengthen families in need in Hong Kong. However, we are disappointed to see that there is no mention of children throughout the Terms of Reference of the Family Council, while elderly, youth and women have been included. It is discriminative, an issue of equal opportunity and another clear example of children's concerns that have been neglected and relegated to the bottom of the government's agenda.

Successful family relationships require a balance of rights, duties and responsibilities of each member of the family. While there are commissions to take care of women, elderly and youth's interests, the Family Council gave a crystal clear picture that we need a commission to protect the interests of children instead of replacing it, so they would not become the only group being left out. Each Commission shall perform its role independently, and together we work to achieve family and social harmony.

The government shall be sensitive to the growing demand from the community. On 8 June 2007, a motion "That this Council urges the Government to set up a Commission on Children to fulfill the obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, safeguard the well-being of children, and ensure that children's perspectives are fully taken into account in the process of formulating government policies" was being passed by the Legislative Council with unanimous votes from all the attending legislators. More than 20 legislators across various political parties spoke to support the motion.<sup>1</sup> We believe the signal was clear and strong enough to draw necessary attention from the HKSAR Government. We could not accept the fact that the newly formed Family Council does not specify children nor children's commission in its Terms of Reference. We doubt if the children's perspective could be considered sufficiently throughout the discussion, not to mention any decision is made that could be against their interests.

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Legislative Council Meeting on 8 June 2007, page 478-521  
<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/chinese/counmtg/floor/cm0608-confirm-ec.pdf>

Under the Terms of Reference, one of the tasks of the Family Council would be to “rationalize the work of Elderly Commission, the Woman’s Commission and the Commission on Youth”, but what about the remaining over one-fifth of the Hong Kong population? We are talking about more than 1.3 million children under the age of 18 in Hong Kong. What about their rights and needs in the family? Is the government assuming that their parents, grandparents, elder siblings will speak up for them? The spate of family violence, home alone accidents and child abuse cases across Hong Kong told us that this is not the case. The fact that the abuse of children occurs most frequently in the family should say something about the need for a body specifically concerned with children as exists in most other countries where attention is given to children’s paramount interests.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child “UNCRC” being the most widely accepted international instrument in the world, openly recognized that children have their individual rights and special needs that are different from adults, so the United Nations also recommended the signatories to establish separate mechanism to protect children. The Convention was ratified in Hong Kong in 1994 and we hope the HKSAR Government does not further neglect or reject its international responsibility. In particular the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has repeatedly called on the HKSAR Government to establish a Commission for Children in Hong Kong.<sup>2</sup>

We are open to discuss the structure of a Children’s Commission as long as its independence is considered to protect the best interest of children. In New Zealand, the Families Commission and Office of Commissioner for Children exist side by side to ensure mutual independence and collaboration at the same time. In replying to an independent study conducted by the Global Institute for Tomorrow for the Hong Kong Committee on Children’s Rights in 2006, the following comments were made in regard to the need for a Family Commission and Children’s Commission:

*“The honest answer is that many things are done that are harmful to children that a Children’s Commissioner can draw attention to and suggest ways in which they can put right, usually working with the children’s family. I would strongly resist the idea that a Children’s Commissioner’s function could be subsumed within a Family Commission. History is against such an idea. Children’s interests do become submerged beneath those of adults when they are mixed”.* Reply from the Office of Commissioner for Children,

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<sup>2</sup> Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child released on 30 September 2005 [http://www.hab.gov.hk/file\\_manager/en/documents/policy\\_responsibilities/CRC\\_Concluding\\_observations\\_2005\\_e.pdf](http://www.hab.gov.hk/file_manager/en/documents/policy_responsibilities/CRC_Concluding_observations_2005_e.pdf)

New Zealand on 3 November 2006.<sup>3</sup>

Last but not the least; we call on the Family Council to allow public access to all the agenda, minutes and documents for public scrutiny so as to enhance its transparency and accountability. We also request the Family Council to produce a public Consultation Paper before the term of members appointed to the Family Council expire at the end of 2009. In this way, the public will be better able to give their views on the recommendations made by the Family Council through a proper channel.

Alliance for Children's Commission\*

6 February 2008

\*The Alliance for Children's Commission could be reached through:

Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights

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<sup>3</sup> *A Children's Commission for Hong Kong – Shaping the Future*  
[http://www.childrenrights.org.hk/A\\_Full\\_report.pdf](http://www.childrenrights.org.hk/A_Full_report.pdf)

## ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN'S COMMISSION

### 爭取成立兒童事務委員會聯盟

**The Alliance for Children's Commission is formed by 25 agencies and professional groups, which have committed themselves to promote the establishment of a Children's Commission in Hong Kong. They include:**

爭取成立兒童事務委員會聯盟由 25 個組織及專業團體組成，承諾致力推動在香港成立兒童事務委員會，他們包括：

Against Child Abuse 防止虐待兒童會

Center for Child Development, Hong Kong Baptist University 香港浸會大學兒童發展研究中心

Children Rights Association 兒童權利關注會

Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong – Hin Keng Centre 香港中華基督教青年會 – 顯徑會所

Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong – Tsuen Wan Centre 香港中華基督教青年會 – 荃灣會所

Dr Fernando Cheung's office 立法會張超雄議員辦事處

Dr Kwok Ka Ki's office 立法會郭家麒議員辦事處

ELCHK – Grace Rehabilitation Service 基督教香港信義會 – 天恩展能服務

ELCHK – Uncle Long Legs' Letter Box 基督教香港信義會 – 長腿叔叔信箱

The Hong Kong Childhood Injury Prevention and Research Association 香港兒童安全促進會

Hong Kong College of Paediatrician 香港兒科醫學院

Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF 聯合國兒童基金會

Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights 香港兒童權利委員會

Hong Kong Council of Early Childhood Education and Services 香港幼兒教育及服務聯會

Hong Kong Down Syndrome Association 香港唐氏綜合症協會

Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor 香港人權監察

229<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong Scout Group 香港童軍 229 旅

Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children 香港保護兒童會

Kids' Dream 童夢同想

Playright Children's Play Association 智樂兒童遊樂協會

Society for Community Organization 香港社區組織協會

Suen Mei Speech & Hearing Centre 宣美語言及聽覺訓練中心

The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong 香港小童群益會

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service 香港社會服務聯會

TREATS 親切

香港保護兒童會  
就成立家庭議會意見書

本會十分贊同政府成立家庭議會以訂立香港的家庭政策，並促進跨部門的合作，訂立有效的措施加強家庭的效能及增加對家庭的支援。

誠然單靠家庭議會並未能處理香港現時急需處理的各項危害兒童福祉的問題，包括日益增加的虐兒事件、父母因疏忽照顧兒童或獨留兒童在家而產生無日無之的兒童傷亡、身心被侵犯、沒有成人看管在街上流離浪盪及未獲妥善處理兒童的健康、衛生、飲食及教導等問題而造成一系列的兒童痴肥、營養不良、健康衛生欠佳及各種兒童行爲及情緒問題。

近年虐待及疏忽照顧兒童的個案不斷增加，單是 2007 年首 3 季，全港虐兒個案有 675 宗，疏忽照顧個案則上升至 10.5%，而施虐者中有 67.9%為受害者的父或母。第 4 季的虐兒數字更大幅上升，令人關注。

這些兒童問題極需要一個專責的兒童事務委員會去處理，訂定全面的兒童政策，並理順部門之間的合作，儘快處理各種危害兒童成長的因素，保障我們的下一代能健康地成長，成為有責任感的公民。

正如立法會文件所載，現時政府推行的家庭議會的重點是處理家庭的問題及增加對家庭的支援，而以上所列的兒童問題不少是基於父母無知或把改善家庭經濟的優次凌駕於兒童福祉而產生的問題。加上近年父母皆是內地居民而來港產子並把子女留港及內地居民在港非婚生子女的個案越來越多。這些跨境兒童問題的個案也非支援本地家庭的措施可以解決。因此本會促請政府成立家庭議會的同時，亦成立一個與家庭議會緊密合作的兒童事務委員會，專責訂立全面的兒童政策及監察兒童的福祉獲得充份照顧，並督促政府部門加強合作，協調有關兒童的政策。

防止虐待兒童會  
回應  
立法會福利事務委員會  
設立家庭議會  
(立法會 CB (2)977/07-08(03)號文件)  
二零零八年二月十四日

(一) 引言

本港接二連三發生家庭慘劇，虐兒和疏忽照顧兒童的情況亦日趨嚴重，我們的兒童和家長極需各方的支援。行政長官於 2007-08 年的施政報告中宣布成立家庭議會，由政務司長領導，希望制訂政策和規劃服務，強化家庭的功能。家庭議會另一目標是理順安老事務委員會、婦女事務委員會及青年事務委員會在家庭議會之下的工作。家庭議會已於去年底成立並已舉行首次會議，和建議六項優先討論議題。但在這些優先議題當中，沒有一項是特別關注兒童的需要。很多時兒童的需要在家需要的前題下完全被忽略。

(二) 聽取兒童的所需所想，委派兒童事務專員

在這些優先討論的議題當中的(丁)點提到促進政策制定者考慮家庭的角度，在政策制定的過程中引入對家庭影響的評估。恐怕兒童的需要往往在家庭的角度，成人的需要和眾多議題中被視為不重要，兒童的聲音一再被忽略和不受重視。聯合國秘書長潘基文為了重視兒童的聲音和瞭解他們所思所想，特別設立了聯合國空中校車聯線 [www.cyberschoolbus.un.org](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org) 為全世界中小學生提供了平台，給他們機會直接向秘書長提問有關秘書長及聯合國正在處理的問題。聯合國也決定委任聯合國秘書長特別兒童代表，關注暴力侵害兒童事情。我們建議港府委派兒童事務專員，專責處理與兒童有關的事務，聽取兒童的意見和聲音。

(三) 建議制定一套暴力零容的政策和措施

香港自 1994 年已承諾遵從《聯合國兒童權利公約》的精神，確保兒童享有其幸福所必需的保護和照料(第 3 條)，和採取一切適

當的立法、行政、社會和教育措施，保護兒童在受父母、法定監護人或任何負責照管兒童的人的照料時，不受到任何形式的身心摧殘，傷害或凌辱、忽視或照料不周、虐待或剝削(第 19 條)。但在家庭議會所建議的優先討論議題中，有提及到與家庭有關的價值、環境、教育和研究，當中涉及大家關注的議題，如跨境婚姻、就業、就學、新來港人士等。其實需要關注的問題還有很多，如學童欺凌、獨留兒童、貧富懸殊、兒童及成人的精神健康問題等。一個安全的家庭有助兒童心身的健康成長，所以在處理家暴和虐兒事件時，需要評估家庭的失衡程度和各成員的互扣關係，但是在大多數的施虐者是家庭成員的虐兒事件中，受害兒童的需要和權利並未受到保護，很多家庭成員都以不破壞家庭關係為藉口，將責任推往兒童處，將虐兒事件淡化為普通的管教子女問題。我們需要正視問題，需要一套能顯示有決心促使暴力零容忍的法例，和一連串全面的政策和措施，配合議會所提出的家長教育，才能相得益彰，建設一個無暴力的社區。

何愛珠

防止虐待兒童會督導主任

二零零八年二月十三日

香港防止虐待長者協會  
提交立法會福利事務委員會  
於二零零八年二月十四日舉行的會議  
就討論「設立家庭議會」意見書

對於民政事務局在今天所呈交給立法會福利事務委員會的文件，本會有以下之意見。

今天，在立法會福利事務委員會會議上，今天討論的議題是「設立家庭議會」。而政府文件指新設立的家庭議會，主要是制定支援和強化家庭的政策、策略，以及就發展相關計劃和活動的事宜，向政府提供意見，並監察有關計劃和活動的推行情況。同時指該議會也會就如何整合各政策局及部門有關家庭成員的政策和相關計劃，包括安老事務委員會、婦女事務委員會及青年事務委員會的工作，向政府提供意見，以確保能夠互相協調，達致更佳效益。

### 「家庭議會」成員代表性不足

本會感到十分奇怪，既然民政事務局文件稱「家庭議會」對日後的施政及家庭政策的制定，起了這麼大的作用；而且，政府所「委任」的非官方成員來自社會福利、專業、工商及學術界等不同的界別。為何該議會內，我們社會福利界功能組別的立法會代表議員；及立法會福利事務委員會的主席及副主席，不是當然的「官方」或「非官方」代表的呢？究竟我們的立法會功能組別的立法會代表議員；及立法會福利事務委員會的主席及副主席，政府認為他們是不夠資格或民意支持，代表市民在「家庭議會」內發表意見呢？還是，這些立法會民意代表不願意加入這「家庭議會」，為市民發聲呢？本會認為民政事務局在今天的會議上，有必要交代及回應有關的情況，以解各界的疑慮；及避免令市民誤會現有的「家庭議會」內的委員，只不過是政府的「橡皮圖章」。

再者，本會覺得為了今日後的家庭政策制定時更為全面，顧及低下階層的勞工對家庭的影響。「家庭議會」的非官方成員，理應同時增加勞工團體的代表(如：「香港工會聯合會」及「香港職工會聯盟」等)。本會認為今天會議內的議員，同樣有必要跟進該問題。

### 「家庭議會」的缺陷

本會認為如果政府反對在「家庭議會」內加入我們社會福利界功能組別的立法會代表議員；及立法會福利事務委員會的主席及副主席加入，成為當然委員的話。本會十分憂慮「家庭議會」只會制定一些「與民為敵」或未能了解民情的政策。(情況就如：各界及立法會一致均認為須要增加高齡津貼(生果金)；同時，立法會福利事務委員會各委員會曾要求政府，在修訂〈家庭暴力條例〉的時候，將虐待長者的問題，加在條例上，以保障長者的權益。但我們現時的安老事務委員會內，在沒有立法會民意代表加入的情況下，過去的兩年間「從未」向政府，反映有增加高齡津貼(生果金)的要求；同時，根據會議紀錄顯示，安老事務委員會亦曾在二零零六年十月十七日的會議上，反對〈家庭暴力條例〉的保障擴大至長者的身上。做成「老竇打仔就告虐兒、仔打老竇就無事」的景象。明顯地，安老事務委員會以往向政府作出的安老政策建議，未能充分了解長者的實際須要。同時更與立法會福利事務委員會的議決及民意對敵。

因此，如果，政府仍一意孤行拒絕將我們社會福利界功能組別的立法會代表議員；及立法會福利事務委員會的主席及副主席加入「家庭議會」內，成為當然代表。本會相信今天的立法會會議已毫無意義，會議浪費大家時間，亦令公眾覺得「家庭議會」，只不過是政府的一個所謂高層次，而且無視立法會代表性存在的「橡皮圖章」。

## 「家庭議會」的未能充分各階層人士的須要

民政事務局在今天所呈交給立法會福利事務委員會的文件告訴我們，「家庭議會」的職權其中是理順安老事務委員會、青年事務委員會及婦女事務委員會的工作。那麼，兒童的問題又怎樣呢？難道近月接二連三的兒童疏忽照顧個案，不是嚴重的家庭問題嗎？

## 「家庭議會」的工作含糊

民政事務局在今天所呈交給立法會福利事務委員會的文件告訴我們，「家庭議會」的工作是理順安老事務委員會、青年事務委員會及婦女事務委員會的工作。那是否代表「家庭議會」取替或接手安老事務委員會、青年事務委員會及婦女事務委員會的所有工作及地位呢？文件並未有交代。

本會覺得，如果政府認為新的「家庭議會」可以同時制定青年、婦女、長者（不包括兒童）的政策的概念正確的話。本會認為，為了節省資源，政府應立即順道終止所有醫院管理局內的專科門診服務，將有關專科門診服務，交由普通科或一個叫高層次的「綜合科」部門接手。那不是更有效運用資源及兼顧身體各部份的情況嗎？

再者，民政事務局在今天所呈交給立法會福利事務委員會的文件告訴我們，「家庭議會」的其中一項工作是：「確立核心家庭價值」。本會認為民政事務局或「家庭議會」有必要告訴我們，什麼是他們認為的「核心家庭價值」呢？本會非常憂慮日後的政策為了「維繫核心家庭價值」，而喪失或放棄了個人利益(如一名長者或市民被家人虐待，日後的政策會否因為要維繫核心家庭價值及制做和諧，而放棄受害人的個人利益，檢控家庭暴力的施虐者呢？)。

## 總結

除了上述各段外，本會同時希望立法會福利事務委員會主席告訴我們，為什麼今天出席會議的團體，大部份都是從事婦女及兒童服務的團體呢？本會希望知道究竟立法會福利事務委員會有否主動邀請長者服務機構呢？如有，委員會究竟「主動」邀請了多少個長者團體出席該會議呢？

本會認為立法會福利事務委員會在今天的議提，不應只聽從婦女及兒童的團體意見。本會認為長者團體的意見亦須要考慮及尊重。本會希望立法會福利事務委員會在日後的會議安排可以有所改善。

香港防止虐待長者協會  
政策及法律支援部  
14-02-2008

## 平等機會婦女聯席

Hong Kong Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities

反家庭暴力倡議計劃聯絡人

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### 平等機會婦女聯席就家庭議會之意見

#### 1. 婦女事務委員會為中央機制，不應隸屬於家庭議會

現時政府聲稱是回應《消除對婦女一切形式歧視公約》要求成立作為加強提高婦女地位的中央機制——婦女事務委員會(下簡稱婦委會)，其秘書處隸屬勞工福利局之下，這樣低層次的安排，一直以來已引起婦女團體多年的詬病，將婦女議題只當作一些社會服務、福利問題；無視婦女無論在政治決策、經濟、保安、教育及人力統籌、房屋等等都會相關議題上不利之處境。另外，雖說是中央機制，實質在資源投放及權力架構上乃與諮詢委員會無異，未能推動三司十二局政策上的“性別觀點主流化”，更遑論制訂整體婦女政策。

然而，更可悲的是在2007年施政報告中，民政事務局局長曾德成在論及家庭議會時曾表示：

『家庭議會在成立後的初期，上述三個事務委員會（包括安老事務委員會、婦女事務委員會及青年事務委員會）仍然會繼續運作，但家庭議會會引導三個事務委員會的工作。我們會諮詢家庭議會及上述三個事務委員會，研究如何把該三個事務委員會在二零零九年三月三十一日前全面融入家庭議會的架構內。』

如將婦委會納入於家庭議會之下，將婦女事務委員會改由家庭議會引導，這將意味政府在執行《消除對婦女一切形式歧視公約》上的一大倒退，將婦女再壓縮並回歸於家庭框架之下，將使香港成為國際笑話。

我們認為政府斷不能將婦委會納入於家庭議會之下，進一步矮化婦女事務；並應該確立和信守“婦女作為獨立個體”的施政原則，在政策層面提出如何認真推行“性別觀點主流化”；而婦委會作為落實國際公約的現行機制，現處於政府低層次架構，並不能落實《消除對婦女一切形式歧視公約》規定，建議將婦委會提升至政務司轄下，並提升其職能及資源。

#### 2. 清楚界定婦女事務委員會及家庭議會的角色

在不從屬的基礎下，我們認為婦委會及家庭議會應擔當不同的角色：

婦委會	家庭議會
<p>按國際公約準則推動兩性平等：</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 中央推動性別觀點主流化及性別審視</li> <li>◆ 推動性別角度之財政預算</li> <li>◆ 防治針對女性之暴力</li> <li>◆ 提升女性政治決策參與</li> <li>◆ 處理婦女貧窮化問題</li> <li>◆ 推動性別平等教育</li> </ul>	<p>以人權及平等角度保障及支援家庭：</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ 處理家庭暴力</li> <li>◆ 推動重視人權的家庭關係</li> <li>◆ 推動接納不同形式的家庭組合</li> <li>◆ 審視現行政策有否違背保護及支援家庭原則</li> <li>◆ 推動家庭友善政策，如：最高工時、最低工資、提供完善托兒服務.....等</li> <li>◆ 消除家庭中兩性不平等的情況</li> <li>◆ 推動具人權及平等之家庭教育工作</li> </ul>

我們認為家庭議會不應淪落將社會問題個人化或家庭化的擋箭牌，政府更不應只高舉維護家庭和諧而忽視家庭中存在的性別歧視及權力不均的情況；政府應更積極從人權及平等角度推動對不同家庭之接納，並從中央政策上檢視有否違背保護及支援家庭原則。

平等機會婦女聯席  
二零零八年二月十四日

立法會福利事務委員會

明愛家庭服務

建議設立家庭議會意見書

2008年2月14日

1. 本會家庭服務對於政府成立並由政務司司長任主席的家庭議會的決定極表歡迎，相信透過議會的成立，可促進社會各界重視家庭的需要和福利，且可進一步凝聚各界的力量，共同創造和諧社會。

2. 議會的功能

發揮領導、協調及推動各政策局、地區議會及組織、非政府機構及工商界等，一同就以下幾點，發揮支援及提升家庭功能的力量：

就各項社會公共政策，以家庭為本位來作考慮、制訂和檢討，以促進家庭成員發揮家庭的功能。

制訂「家庭影響評估」制度，以評估現在及來來的政策、法例及措施對家庭功能及凝聚力的影響。

家庭影響評估範圍應包括：

- 家庭的經濟狀況
- 家庭的照顧功能
- 家庭成員之間的凝聚力
- 政策對不同類型的家庭，尤其是弱勢社羣的影響

進行有系統的研究各項影響家庭功能、支援及凝聚等的因素，以作制訂政策、策略及措施的參考。

積極推動適合本土的家庭倫理教育，以重建重視家庭生活及倫理的價值觀。

共同積極推動家庭友善的工作及社會環境

制定跨局、跨部門、跨專業的策略來加強對家庭，特別是弱勢家庭的支援。

### 3. 家庭議會與其他委員會的關係

現時的老人、青年、婦女事務委員會，以及團體正積極倡議的兒童事務委員會，均有其主責的羣體，各有其獨特需要和關注，因此期望這些委員會仍繼續其職能，就所關注的羣體制定適切的發展策略。而家庭議會則關注整體性的家庭狀況及發展，並就各委員會之間所觸及的共同議題，例如稅務政策、房屋編配、城市規劃、入境政策以至侍產假、彈性工作時間等，作討論、研究及決策，以平衡家庭與個人之間在政策考慮上之矛盾。

香港明愛家庭服務

督導主任 郭志英

## 殘障人士及照顧者關注組

就立法會福利事務委員會

2008年2月14日會議

討論『設立家庭議會』的意見

「殘障人士及照顧者關注組」於2006年9月正式成立，由香港肢體弱能人士家長協會、嚴重弱智人士家長協會、關注傷殘津貼聯席、香港肌健協會、香港復康聯盟、自強協會、路向四肢傷殘人士協會等多個團體，及個別人士（肢體殘障人士與照顧者）聯合組成，目的為改善殘障人士的福利及生活質素，發展較佳的社會條件及關注照顧者的權益。

本關注組欣見政府設立家庭議會，以回應特首曾蔭權06至07年度的施政報告。本港人口約700萬，若以3人為一家庭計算，粗略估計全港約有233萬個家庭。據2001年統計署發表的《第28號專題報告書：殘疾人士及長期病患者》顯示，全港殘疾人士數目約269,500人，另有62,000至80,000名弱智人士不包括在內。換言之，全港殘障人士數目應約有340,000人，來自約是34萬個家庭，佔全港家庭總數的15%，即約每7個家庭當中，有1個家庭需要照顧殘障家屬。

跟普通家庭一樣，這34萬個殘障人士家庭也要面對就業、教育、照顧或經濟的問題。可是，他們還需要照顧有殘障的家屬，因而使殘障人士家庭增加照顧壓力、服務需要及多項醫療的經濟負擔等。再者，這些情況實非短期困境問題，而是長年累月地由家庭各成員面對及承擔；其中，以堅持自食其力而沒有申領綜援的殘障人士家庭經濟壓力最大。

現時，支援殘障人士及照顧者的服務雖然種類不少，可惜也只是一些較為零碎及未能對應需求的服務，有不少殘障人士其實得不到合適服務。猶記得在2005年，一名中年男子與坐輪椅的媽媽在九龍城碼頭一起跳海自殺，2007年屯門田景村一名中年女士抱著殘障兒子燒炭自殺事件……，反映到家人照顧殘障家屬的無助及所承受的無窮壓力，悲劇發生實令社會大眾痛心難過。關注組盼望新成立的家庭議會，必須關切到這34萬個殘障人士家庭，所面對的精神壓力，照顧困難及生活需要，政府更加不要輕視，這些埋在社區內的計時炸彈。家庭議會應著手研究殘障人士家庭的壓力，防止有同類的悲劇發生。

回應特首曾蔭權先生在05-06年度施政報告第45段，「重視家庭是我們的核心價值觀念……亦特別體恤單親家長和有需要照顧親屬，尤其是殘疾親屬的家庭所面對的特殊困難」，關注組認為政府必須鞏固殘障人士家庭的支援網絡，推進社區傷健共融及公民教育，及落實執行復康計劃方案。

本組強烈要求：(1)在討論文件第己項「在有需要時開展研究，範圍可包括跨境婚姻……新來港人士的家庭對特別支援服務及措施的需求」加入殘障人士家庭，以落實05-06年度特首曾蔭權先生給殘障人士家庭的承諾。

(2)家庭議會成員需加入殘障人士及照顧者代表。

2008年2月14日

立法會  
*Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(2)1296/07-08  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting (*Extracts*)  
held on Thursday, 14 February 2008, at 10:00 am  
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

**Members present** : Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung (Chairman)  
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan  
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, GBS, JP  
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP  
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP  
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC  
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki  
Hon Mrs Anson CHAN, GBM, JP

**Members absent** : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum, JP  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung

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**I. Establishment of the Family Council**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)977/07-08(03) and (04), CB(2)1037/07-08(01) to (03), CB(2)1058/07-08(01) to (03), CB(2)1080/07-08(01) and CB(2)1090/07-08(01)]

1. Secretary, Family Council (Secy/Family Council) briefed members on the establishment of the Family Council. She said that at the first meeting of the Family Council held on 14 December 2007, members exchanged views on their

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expectations of the work of the Council and the specific issues to be addressed in the months ahead. In view of the broad range of issues involved, the Family Council agreed to accord priority to the areas of work set out in paragraph 7 of the Administration's paper. Secy/Family Council added that the Family Council would seek to rationalize the work of the Elderly Commission (EC), the Women's Commission (WC) and the Commission on Youth (CoY) under the Family Council by March 2009 and it would explore ways to achieve more collaboration between the Council and the three commissions.

Views of deputations

2. The Chairman welcomed the deputations to the meeting. The views of deputations are summarised below.

*Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children*  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/07-08(01)]

3. While welcoming the establishment of the Family Council, Ms Susan SO expressed concern that the Council had not given due attention to the needs and interests of children. Having regard to the increasing numbers of child abuse cases and children living in cross-boundary families, Ms SO strongly urged the Administration to set up a Children's Commission to advise it on policies from the children's perspective and enhance inter-departmental efforts in promoting and protecting the rights of children.

*Against Child Abuse*  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/07-08(02)]

4. Ms Jessica HO expressed disappointment at the Family Council's failure to accord priority to the protection of children's rights and interests. She considered that the Administration should model on the experience of the United Nations Cyberschoolbus project and appoint a Commissioner for Children to listen to children's voices and to better understand their needs. Ms HO urged the Administration to view the subject matter from the children's perspective, and adopt a zero tolerance approach in formulating child protection policies and tackling family violence and child abuse cases.

*Hong Kong College of Paediatricians*  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1037/07-08(01)]

5. Dr Patricia IP supported in principle the setting up of the Family Council. However, she hoped that the Administration could make public the considerations behind the decision to establish the Family Council and maintain a high degree of transparency in the operation of the Council. Given that children were one of the most vulnerable groups amongst different age groups, in the

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absence of a Children's Commission to oversee the specific needs of children, the Administration and the Family Council should ensure that children's interests would be given due consideration in the course of achieving more collaboration between the Council and the three commissions. Dr IP added that the Family Council should not take over the work of the three commissions.

*Society for Community Organization*

6. Miss SZE Lai-shan welcomed the establishment of the Family Council. She hoped that the Family Council would enhance inter-departmental efforts in family support, and draw up a clear and wider definition of family. Miss SZE considered that the Family Council should accord priority to identify effective ways to tackle family violence and inter-generational poverty, and enhance support to cross-boundary families. She held the view that EC, WC and CoY should not be subsumed under the Family Council. In addition, a Children's Commission should be set up to better safeguard the well-being of children.

*The Hong Kong Council of Social Service*  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1037/07-08(02)]

7. Ms Elsa CHIU said that the Family Council should seek to enhance effective coordination of family policies across bureaux and departments. In respect of its work priority, the Family Council should first organize a summit in 2008 so as to provide a platform for the stakeholders to exchange views on promoting family-friendly employment practices, strengthening parental education and enhancing support to cross-boundary families. Ms CHIU further said that the Administration should introduce family impact assessment in policy formulation. Moreover, the Family Council should not take over the respective roles of EC, WC and CoY.

*The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong*

8. Mr James LEUNG agreed that the Family Council should accord priority to the identification of core family values. The Council should also step up efforts to promote family-friendly employment practices, especially in small and medium enterprises, initiate more studies on different family models and foster the introduction of family impact assessment in policy formulation. The Family Council should enhance transparency in its work in order to facilitate public engagement in the formulation of family policies. Mr LEUNG stressed that the Council should foster its collaboration with EC, WC and CoY, instead of replacing the three commissions.

*Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights*  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1037/07-08(03)]

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9. Ms Billy WONG said that she spoke on behalf of the Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights and the Alliance for Children's Commission which was committed to promoting the setting up of a Children's Commission to represent the interests of children. As the Family Council had not included safeguarding children's interests in its terms of reference, she doubted whether the children's perspective could be considered sufficiently throughout the discussion, not to mention any decision which might be made against their interests. Pointing out that a motion urging the Administration to set up a Children's Commission was passed at the Council meeting on 8 June 2007, Ms WONG said that the Administration should respond to the strong call from the community and establish a Children's Commission expeditiously. She added that the Family Council should work closely with EC, WC and CoY, but not replace the three commissions.

*The Against Elderly Abuse of Hong Kong*  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1058/07-08(03)]

10. In the absence of representatives of Legislative Council and labour unions in the Family Council, Ms Kennex YUE cast doubt about its representativeness. She was of the view that the Family Council should give due attention to the rights and needs of children in the family. She urged the Administration to provide more details about the plan for the Family Council to rationalize the work of EC, WC and CoY under the Council, and the definition of "core family values".

*Caritas – Hong Kong (Family Service)*  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1090/07-08(01)]

11. Ms KWOK Chi-ying welcomed and supported the establishment of the Family Council. She took the view that the Family Council should review the existing policies and come up with suggestions to enhance family support. The Council should also initiate family-related studies, promote family-friendly working environment, and organize a summit to solicit public views on family-related issues. Consideration should also be given to introducing a family impact assessment in policy formulation. Ms KWOK added that the Family Council, EC, WC and CoY should perform their respective roles independently. As such, the Family Council should study issues of common interests with the other three commissions, instead of integrating with them.

*Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF*

12. Miss LI Wai-chi said that Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF was a member of The Alliance for Children's Commission. Pointing out that the interests of children were not represented in the Family Council, Miss LI urged the Administration to safeguard the well-being of children and take into full

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account the children's interests when studying family policies.

*The Association for the Advancement of Feminism*

13. Ms AU Mei-po expressed dissatisfaction at the lack of public consultation prior to the establishment of the Family Council. She considered that the Family Council should spell out clearly the definitions of "family" and "core family values", and give due regard to the specific needs of different age groups in the family. Ms AU added that EC, WC and CoY should not be integrated with the Family Council, as each commission had been performing its specific role independently.

*Hong Kong Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities*  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1080/07-08(01)]

14. Ms CHUNG Yuen-yi expressed reservations about the Administration's proposal to rationalize the work of WC and CoY under the Family Council. She said that according to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Government should establish an independent, high-level body to safeguard the well-being of women. It would undermine the importance of women's affairs if WC was put under the purview of the Family Council. She stressed that WC should remain as an independent body and be headed by the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS).

*Hong Kong Association for the Survivors of Women Abuse (Kwan Fook)*

15. Ms LIU Ngan-fung said that the interests of women and children were very often compromised in cases of family violence for the sake of family cohesion. Given that the interests of different age groups and gender sectors in the family were different, she considered that EC, WC and CoY should maintain the status quo to safeguard the well-being of specific groups. Ms LIU further said that under the policy of requiring applications for CSSA to be made on a household basis, some elderly were forced to move out of their families in order to meet the eligibility requirement, if their family members refused to apply for CSSA. This was in conflict with the policy of fostering family cohesion. As such, the Administration should relax the requirement of applying for CSSA on a household basis.

*殘障人士及照顧者關注組*

16. Ms HO Bo-ching expressed support for the establishment of the Family Council. Pointing out that there were about 340 000 families with disabled members in Hong Kong, she was disappointed at the Family Council's failure to accord priority to meet the needs of the disabled and their families. Ms HO

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considered that the Administration should enhance community support and rehabilitation services for the disabled and their families having regard to their special needs. She held the view that the Family Council should comprise members who represented the disabled and their families.

*1<sup>st</sup> Step Association*

17. Echoing the views of Ms HO Bo-ching, Miss NG Yan-ye said that the Administration should come up with measures to enhance support for carers of the disabled, especially those "hidden carers" who lacked support network. In this regard, the Administration and the Hospital Authority (HA) should strengthen the co-ordination and provision of assistance for paralysed patients, persons with mental illness and their carers, and expedite the establishment of service centres for paralysed patients. Miss NG added that the Family Council should foster the introduction of family impact assessment in policy formulation and spell out clearly the definition of "family" and "core family values".

18. Responding to the views and suggestions made by the deputations, Secy/Family Council made the following points –

- (a) the Administration recognized that many complicated social problems often rooted in the family and that these problems needed to be tackled from the family perspective. The setting up of the Family Council aimed to establish a family-based support network and forge closer and harmonious relationships among family members. The Family Council would advise the Administration on the formulation of policies and strategies for supporting and strengthening the family as well as the development of related programmes and activities across different bureaux and departments, and monitor their implementation;
- (b) the Family Council agreed that the priority issues to be considered should include identification of core family values; ways to create a pro-family environment including work environment; and ways to enhance the effectiveness and co-ordination of family education in the months ahead;
- (c) one of the terms of reference of the Family Council was to take into account the needs of different age and gender sectors. With this in mind, groups in need, including children and disabled family members and their caretakers be duly considered in formulating the policy recommendations;
- (d) on matters relating to children's rights, the Children's Rights Forum currently under the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

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served to provide a platform for exchanging views on matters concerning children's rights amongst non-governmental organizations (NGOs), children's representatives and the Government;

- (e) it would be a challenging task to strike a proper balance between the interests of individuals, families and community as a whole when considering matters relating to the interests of the family;

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- (f) the Family Council sought to rationalize the work of EC, WC and CoY under the Council by March 2009. The Council would carefully consider views of stakeholders in the process. Deputations' views on the work of the Family Council and its relationship with the three commissions would also be conveyed to the Family Council for consideration;
- (g) the Family Council comprised five officials responsible for social policies relating to family issues and welfare services, and 16 non-official members, who were appointed in their personal capacity, representing different sectors of the community. Members came with different expertise, knowledge and experience from their professions, including social welfare, professional, business, and academic, and would be able to provide advice to the Government from different perspective;
- (h) in response to the suggestion of introducing family impact assessment in policy formulation, the Family Council considered that one of its priority tasks was to foster a family perspective among policy makers. Introduction of family impact assessment in policy formulation in long run was one of the options for consideration; and
- (i) the Family Council recognized the need and importance of public engagement in its work. The issue was raised at its first meeting and the Council would deliberate how best to engage stakeholders and work closely with them to promote a family-friendly environment and enhance coordination of family-related services.

Discussion

19. While welcoming the establishment of the Family Council, Miss CHAN Yuen-han shared the concerns raised by the deputations, in particular the composition of the Family Council, and the collaboration between the Council and the three commissions. In the absence of representatives from frontline social workers in the Family Council, Miss CHAN was concerned how the Council and the Administration could understand fully the problems and difficulties faced by the grassroots. Given that the Family Council had yet to draw up an action plan, Miss CHAN considered that a subcommittee should be formed under the Panel in the next term to follow up the work of the Family Council.

20. Ms LI Fung-ying took the view that the Administration should consider seriously the views and suggestions raised by deputations that the Family

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Council should come up with concrete recommendations to meet the needs of individual groups, especially children and the disabled. Noting that the Family Council sought to rationalize the work of EC, WC and CoY under the Council by March 2009, Ms LI asked why the Family Council would take more than one year to study the matter. She further asked about the meeting schedule of the Family Council and how the Council would promote better work-life balance having regard to the long working hours of low-income workers.

21. Secy/Family Council responded that as the Family Council had held its first meeting in December 2007, it would take some time to explore ways to achieve more collaboration between the Council and the three commissions. It sought to rationalize the work of these commissions by March 2009. In line with the practice of other commissions, the Family Council would meet on a quarterly basis. As regards concerns about the work environment and working hours and the impact on the family lives of employees, one of the priority tasks of the Family Council was to identify ways to promote family-friendly employment practices and work-life balance. In considering how to enhance a pro-family environment and strengthen family support measures, the Family Council would also take into account subjects including the families with special needs, e.g. families with disabled family members and children.

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22. The Chairman took the view that the Family Council should take into account the specific needs of individual family members, in particular the disabled and children, in the course of working on fostering a family perspective among policy-makers. Secy/Family Council undertook to convey the views to the Family Council.

23. Mr Albert HO said that despite the strong call from the community for setting up a Children's Commission, the Administration had not provided a positive response and decided to establish a Family Council instead. He enquired about the rationale for the decision. Mr HO considered it unacceptable for the Family Council to assume the overall responsibility of rationalization of the work of various commissions currently responsible for handling issues regarding different age groups and genders. The Administration should account for the arrangement, particularly whether bringing WC under the Family Council would contravene with CEDAW under which the Government should establish an independent body to deal with matters relating to the interests of women.

24. Mrs Anson CHAN shared the deputations' views that EC, WC and CoY were performing different roles to meet the specific needs of elderly, women and youth, and should not be brought under the Family Council. There was an imminent need for the establishment of a Children's Commission. Pointing out that the terms of reference of the Family Council were indeed very broad and covered a wide range of topics, Mrs CHAN considered that the Family Council should set out its specific work plan in the coming six to nine months, and accord

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top priority to enhance inter-departmental efforts in handling issues regarding family support.

25. Secy/Family Council reiterated that the Administration was open-minded on the views raised by members and deputations. The Family Council would consider carefully how to rationalize the work of EC, WC and CoY and achieve more collaboration between the Council and the three commissions.

26. Mr Albert HO and Mr LEE Cheuk-yan disagreed with the Administration's remarks that the root of many complicated social problems often lay at home. On the contrary, many family problems originated from social problems, such as cross-boundary marriages. It was the Administration's responsibility to solve the social problems at root. Noting that the Family Council would identify ways to enhance family-friendly employment practices, Mr LEE was disappointed at the lack of representatives from the labour sector in the Family Council. Since the Family Council would meet every three months, he was concerned about the work progress and targets of the Family Council.

27. Secy/Family Council said that the provision of family support work spanned various Government bureaux and departments. The Family Council was set up with a view to bringing together efforts of different bureau/departments in the provision of family support work. Official members of the Family Council could help contribute to the better coordination of various policies and measures related to the family. The Family Council had agreed to accord priority to specific issues to be addressed in the months ahead, as set out in paragraph 7 of the Administration's paper.

28. While agreeing with the need to identify core family values and ways to create a pro-family environment, Dr KWOK Ka-ki considered it equally important for the Family Council to draw up plans and measures to enhance support to families in need, especially those families having children with specific learning difficulties and disabled members. He urged the Family Council to accord priority to formulate an action plan.

29. Secy/Family Council responded that the Family Council would advise the Government on the integration of family policies and related programmes and assured members that the Family Council aside, on-going work by different bureaux and departments to address the needs of families and family members/individuals/groups in different manners would certainly continue. As the Family Council had just been established, the detailed work plan had yet to be worked out at this juncture.

30. To keep members abreast of the Family Council's work progress, Dr KWOK Ka-ki and the Chairman requested the Administration to provide papers and minutes of meetings of the Family Council to the Panel.

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Secy/Family Council undertook to convey members' request to the Council for consideration.

31. The Chairman said that while members expressed general support for the establishment of the Family Council, they had consensus views that EC, WC and CoY should not be subsumed under the Family Council having regard to the fact that the three commissions were currently responsible for specific issues regarding different age groups and genders. In addition, members strongly urged the setting up of a Children's Commission expeditiously. The Chairman further said that consideration should be given to expanding the membership of the Family Council to include representatives from the labour sector and disabled. The Chairman added that the specific issues to be addressed by the Family Council involved policy considerations and would impact on policy formulation. In this regard, the Family Council should draw up its targets, especially on how to foster the collaboration among different bureaux and departments on family support work. The Administration should revert to the Panel on the work progress of the Family Council.

32. Mr Albert HO was of the view that the Panel should further discuss the matter at a future meeting, and CS, as Chairman of the Family Council, and members of the Council should be invited to attend the meeting. Echoing Mr HO's suggestion, the Chairman said that the meeting should be held after the announcement of the 2008-2009 Budget so that CS could take the opportunity to brief the Panel on family and welfare-related initiatives under the Budget. Miss CHAN Yuen-han suggested that CS and members of the Family Council should be invited to brief the Panel on the Family Council's work plan in April/May 2008. Members agreed.

Admin

33. In concluding discussion, the Chairman said that the Administration should revert to the Panel on the work progress of the Family Council in April/May 2008, and CS and members of the Family Council should be invited to attend the meeting.

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