

LCQ16: Child policy

Following is a question by the Hon Albert Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Miss Denise Yue (in the absence of Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho) at the Legislative Council meeting today (November 29):

Question:

In January 2005, the Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights, a community-based organisation, submitted jointly with 19 non-government organisations a report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The report considers that there is an urgent need for Hong Kong to formulate a child policy and set up an independent Commission on Children responsible for implementing the policy. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) why it has not yet set up an independent Commission on Children, and whether it will accept the above recommendations of the report; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(b) as the authorities are considering the establishment of a Family Commission, whether it plans to include children affairs into the purview of that Commission, instead of setting up an independent Commission on Children; if so, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

Madam President,

My reply to Hon Albert Chan's question is as follows:

The Government attaches great importance to the child policy and has enacted specific laws to protect children. In formulating these policies and legislation, the bureaux concerned have taken into account this important factor of protecting

children's rights. They will also keep in view the laws and policies under their purview and propose changes as and where necessary in consultation with the relevant advisory committees and/or stakeholders. As matters relating to children involve different policy areas (e.g. education, medical and health services, welfare and recreation), they need to be dealt with by a number of related bureaux but the Government will continue to ensure that there is proper co-ordination amongst relevant bureaux and departments. Moreover, the Legislative Council, the Office of the Ombudsman, non-government organisations and the media will also actively monitor the impact of the relevant laws and the implementation of policies.

We consider the existing arrangements effective, enabling us to make flexible and quick responses to address the concerns of the public. We do not have any plans to change this mechanism at the moment, but will continue to communicate with non-government organisations concerned with children's rights and listen to their views.

In his Policy Address this year, the Chief Executive indicated that the Government would study whether we should set up an integrated, holistic and high-level Family Commission responsible for policies and initiatives relating to family support. The study aims at considering the most effective means to implement our social policy and strengthen support to the family. The mechanisms for handling issues concerning different gender and age groups (including youth and children) will be examined in the process. The study has already commenced and is expected to be finished by mid-2007. No conclusion has yet been drawn.

Ends/Wednesday, November 29, 2006