

Summit on Social Enterprise explores the way forward for SE

The Home Affairs Bureau organised a Summit on Social Enterprise (SE) today (December 20) to explore the way forward for the further development of SE in Hong Kong. In addition to some 600 participants from various sectors, including the business sector, academics, non-government organisations (NGOs) and operators of local SEs, the Chief Executive, Mr Donald Tsang, also attended the summit.

The summit invited Mr Simon Tucker, Associate Director of the Young Foundation in the United Kingdom; Mr Chris Cusano, Director of Ashoka in the United States; and Dr Lily Chiang, Chairman of Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, to give keynote speeches respectively on missions and visions of SE, key elements of successful social entrepreneurs, and how the business community can contribute in promoting SE development.

“The Government’s policies of promoting SE is enduring and that today’s summit is only the first step. We do not expect that all problems relating to SE can be resolved today, but I hope that starting from today, through a tripartite collaboration among the Government, business sector and the community, we can solidly launch more successful SEs to draw a wider attention from the community as well as more involvement from the business sector,” said the Chief Executive in his opening remarks.

Participants from various sectors, including the business sector, academics, NGOs and operators of local SEs, have given valuable views in the breakout sessions on various areas of SE such as human resources, marketing/business models, and financing and business support. The three moderators of panel discussions, namely the Hon Bernard Chan, Prof Stephen Cheung and Mr Francis Ngai, reported the conclusions of the discussions at the summit.

Following the discussions, participants of the summit have identified the vision, objective and basic strategies for the development of SE in Hong Kong:

* The Government and various sectors of the community recognise the vision of SEs as helping people to be self-reliant as well as taking from the community and reinvesting into the community.

* As regards the objective of developing SE in Hong Kong, participants of the summit considered that it could on the one hand create job opportunities for the socially disadvantaged to help them to be self-reliant. On the other hand, it would provide a new channel for different sectors and organisations to meet the needs of different community groups with innovative approaches, so as to foster a new caring culture and enhance social harmony.

* As on the strategies to promote the further development of SE in Hong Kong, views expressed in the summit are summarised below:

(a) to enhance public understanding of SE, especially the social objectives achieved, with a view to creating a more conducive environment for the development of SE and its clientele;

(b) to promote cross-sector collaboration and encourage more private enterprises to participate in the development of SE;

(c) to nurture more talents for SE to enhance creativity; and

(d) to strengthen support for SE in respect of marketing, exploring market niches, financing and other operational issues in order to enhance its competitiveness and sustainable development.

To encourage the establishment and development of SE, the Government has provided seed money in a number of specified areas, including:

1. The Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme of the Home Affairs Department to provide grants for NGOs to carry out SE projects during their initial operations to promote self-reliance of the socially disadvantaged;

2. The Community Investment and Inclusion Fund of the Labour and Welfare Bureau to support cross-sector collaboration and build up social capital; and

3. The Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise Project of the Social Welfare Department to provide funding support for NGOs to run small enterprises so as to create more employment and

training opportunities for people with disabilities.

The Government will introduce a series of new measures to further promote the development of SE in Hong Kong, which include:

1. To set up a matching platform to provide necessary information to business organisations and NGOs which are interested in partnering with each other, so as to facilitate a more systematic and efficient cross-sector collaboration between private enterprises and SEs.
2. To liaise with organisations and professionals to take part in SE Mentorship Scheme to provide business or operational advisory service to newly established SEs. Retired or working professionals from the business sector will advise and support SEs on various areas such as operation, market strategy and staff training. So far, around 100 organisations/professionals have signed up to support the scheme.
3. To introduce a pilot scheme in 2008 to give eligible SEs priority in bidding 38 Government cleansing services contracts, involving a total value of about \$17 million. The scheme is expected to provide about 300 employment opportunities to SEs. The contracts will be provided by 19 departments and cover all 18 districts. SEs which take root in various districts are expected to benefit from the scheme. The Government will continue to look for suitable service contracts under the principles of transparency and fairness as well as conforming to the agreement of the World Trade Organisation.

In his concluding remarks, the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, said that the summit was very fruitful. "The Government will continue to implement various support measures, including the financial support under the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme. We will continue to listen to the views of the community and consolidate our experience so as to improve our policies and measures on SE development. We will evaluate the effectiveness of the development of SE after one year," he said.

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