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**Speech by the Hon Mrs Selina Chow Liang Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Motion Debate on Developing Renewable Energy Resources, 30
October 2002**

Selina Chow:

Madam President, the serious air pollution in Hong Kong has brought about a negative impact on both the health of the people as well as the tourist industry. The polluted gases are mainly generated by the burning of mineral fuels such as coal, petroleum and natural gas. With the development of the local economy as well as the population growth, the amount of energy consumed has been continuously increasing. Therefore, we strongly agree that we should actively study whether renewable energy, which causes "zero pollution" and is inexhaustible, should be developed and utilized. Meanwhile, the SAR Government has already put forwards a proposal to the Central Government to extend the Kyoto Protocol to Hong Kong. We have to take up this international obligation to study the issues of the application of renewable energy resources and the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, so as to fulfil the ideal of sustainable development.

The Liberal Party all along supports the development and application of renewable energy resources. However, I must stress that the concept of sustainable development aims at striking an appropriate balance between the three aspects, namely, the community, the economy and environmental protection. We are of the view that, in utilizing renewable energy, we must do it in a way that is compatible with the principle of economic efficiency, taking account of its impact on the community and the economy. We do not want any party to proceed with this at all cost and act in a way that ignores the interests of other parties.

Doubtless the development of renewable energy resources is an important part in the work of environmental protection. However, while pursuing this, we have to consider our own capabilities as well as limitations, and we should never act blindly. Presently, the major problem in introducing renewable energy is its cost-effectiveness, which was also mentioned by Dr LAW Chi-kwong just a moment ago. Renewable energy is still an innovative technology now, the cost of which is higher than traditional fossil fuels. This is an indisputable fact. According to the research undertaken by some specialists, the costs of using solar power in Hong Kong will be six to nine times higher than those of generating electricity by using coal, natural gas and nuclear technology. Guangdong also faces the same problem. Presently, Guangdong uses wind energy to generate electricity at a cost of RMB 0.61 yuan per unit, over 60% higher than the traditional energy generating technology or hydro-electric power which costs RMB 0.38

yuan.

Besides, it is necessary for Hong Kong to possess the essential potentials for developing renewable energy, such as solar power, wind, and so on. But we must also carefully consider whether we have sufficient technical expertise and talents to develop and construct the relevant power generation facilities and equipment. Meanwhile, we also have to consider such issues as the cost of construction, the interconnection of power supply networks, or even the future demand, and so on. The Liberal Party acknowledges the significance of developing renewable energy resources, but we think that the Government, while promoting the development of renewable energy resources, must also give due consideration to the economic benefits of the community as a whole.

With the premise of achieving a balance among the three aspects, namely, the economy, the community and environmental protection, I think the Government could explore the possibility of developing renewable energy resources in the following directions. First, the Liberal Party hopes that the Government can expeditiously formulate an explicit energy policy and co-ordinate the various studies and relevant projects. In fact, the Government has already started to introduce renewable energy technology in recent years. For example, the Architectural Services Department will install solar panels in 10 buildings in the Science Park. It is estimated that this will achieve an annual saving of \$200,000 in electricity tariffs. However, in order to save this \$200,000, how much resources the Government has spent on it? What proportion does this \$200,000 represent in the total expenditure on power consumption? Considering the issue in this way would enable us to arrive at a conclusion of whether the initiative is justified. Moreover, the Government has also drawn up Building Energy Codes and installed photovoltaic panels in public buildings to dovetail with the plan to generate electricity by solar power. We must collect the relevant information from these experiments for analysis, so as to enable us to make sensible judgements from the perspective of economic efficiency.

An advanced society should adopt an open approach to consider and analyse novelties and new technology. However, it should, at the same time, adopt a pragmatic approach to consider the issues in greater depth and in a more comprehensive manner. For example, in considering the development of renewable energy resources, it should evaluate the kind of investments the community has to make in various aspects like talent training, and so on. This is also a commitment that cannot be ignored.

In social development, the concept of sustainable development must be consistently implemented so as to take care of the interests of all the different parties. The original motion suggests the Government to incorporate the policy on renewable energy resources into town planning and urban development strategies. If this is conducive to achieving sustainable development and that the community also agrees in general that it is worthwhile to pay the price involved, then of course we would

think that the suggestion is worthy of our support.

Hong Kong is just at the starting point of promoting the development of renewable energy resources. The Government should strengthen its work in educating the public on the knowledge in this aspect. The Liberal Party suggests that the Government should step up its educational and promotional drive in schools, government departments and commercial and industrial institutions, so as to enable the people to have a better and clearer understanding of the relevant knowledge as well as the scope of its application. The concept of sustainable development should also be introduced in this context, so that the people can understand that they should strive for a suitable and favourable balance among the three aspects, namely, the community, the economy and environmental protection.

With these remarks, I support the motion. Thank you, Madam President.