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**THE WOMEN'S FOUNDATION JOINS FORCES WITH DIFFERENT SECTORS TO
CALL FOR A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON HONG KONG'S POVERTY, AGEING
AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES**

Hong Kong, October 7, 2013 – The Women's Foundation and the Gender Research Centre of The Chinese University of Hong Kong jointly hosted a Symposium on Women Envisioning a New Society on October 5 to identify and address the impact on women of Hong Kong's most pressing policy issues including poverty, the ageing population, education, employment and the economy. The Symposium attracted a diverse audience from government, the business sector, academia and non-profit organizations.

According to Mr. Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, Secretary of Labour and Welfare, who opened the forum: "With Hong Kong facing the dual challenges of a rapidly ageing population and dwindling workforce, we need to seriously consider how best to unleash the potential of women and attract them to the labour market. The Administration is looking into the ways and means of attracting and facilitating more women to join the labour market through family-friendly measures."

While there have been improvements in the education and workplace opportunities available for women, issues like wage discrimination, gender stereotyped roles and a lack of retirement protection continue to leave women vulnerable according to Prof Wong Yu-cheung, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, one of the panelists for the Symposium.

Other areas of concern which emerged from the discussions included:

- The lack of adequate childcare facilities in Hong Kong
- The relative lack of preventive healthcare services for women in Hong Kong
- The specific needs of marginalized groups including ethnic minority women and New Arrival women
- Whether Hong Kong is developing the kind of jobs and industries that young women (and men) aspire to and can excel in

The other speakers for the Symposium included Prof Fanny Cheung, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Stephanie Hui, Managing Director, Goldman Sachs.

The panellists for the Symposium comprised:

- Mr Chua Hoi-Wai, Business Director, Policy Research & Advocacy Hong Kong Council of Social Service
- Dr Anita Chan Kit-wa, Associate Professor, Department of Social Science, Hong Kong Institute of Education
- Prof Ngo Hang-yue, Department of Management, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Prof Wong Yu-cheung, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work of The Chinese University of Hong Kong

They were joined by discussants from:

- Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, St. James' Settlement
- The Women's Foundation

- Hong Kong Women Workers' Association
- Hong Kong Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities
- The Boys' & Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong

The speakers agreed that educating the Government, businesses, teachers, parents and the public on gender issues and the adoption of a collaborative approach to re-define the status of women in Hong Kong was paramount. "To resolve these issues requires cross departmental efforts within the Government and across different parts of the community," said Dr Christine Loh Kung-wai, Under Secretary for the Environment, who was the lunchtime keynote speaker at the Symposium.

The Symposium was supported by the Equal Opportunities Commission, Civic Exchange, Hong Kong Council of Social Service and Goldman Sachs Gives who were also the event sponsor.

"It is a good sign that people from a range of sectors are concerned with women's issues and open to adopting a more comprehensive outlook on Hong Kong's future development" said Ms Tse Shuk-In, Deputy Chief Executive of Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association. Meanwhile, Ms Yang Mei, Chief Executive, New Women Arrivals League, commended the Symposium for giving a voice to the needs of grassroots women.

"It is our goal following this Symposium to forge an action plan that is inclusive of all opinions to create a new, more balanced society," said Su-Mei Thompson, CEO of The Women's Foundation. The Foundation is working with the organisations who participated in the Symposium on a set of recommendations for the Government, educators, businesses, parents and NGOs to tackle Hong Kong's most pressing issues as they impact on women.

About The Women's Foundation

The Women's Foundation is a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls in Hong Kong through ground-breaking research, innovative and impactful community programmes, and education and advocacy. Our three key focus areas are challenging gender stereotypes, increasing the number of women in decision-making and leadership positions, and empowering women in poverty to achieve a better quality of life for themselves and their families. For more information, go to www.thewomensfoundationhk.org.

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