

**Briefing by H. E. Ambassador Zhang Yishan
Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations
on the United Nations Asia-Pacific Leadership Forum:
Sustainable Development for Cities
at the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

(19 April 2004, New York)

Mr. Chairman:

I would like to begin by congratulating you on your election as chairman of the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. I am confident that you will guide this session to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Chairman,

The Chinese Government and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) jointly convened the United Nations Asia-Pacific Leadership Forum: Sustainable Development for Cities, from 25 to 26 February 2004, in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Hosted by the government of Hong Kong SAR, China, the forum was attended by more than 300 delegates from cities, academia, private sector and NGOs of 18 Asia-Pacific countries. Participants at the forum held discussions on topics covering economic growth and job creation, infrastructure, urban housing and land use, meeting basic social needs, improving mobility and sustainable tourism, and adopted the Hong Kong Declaration on Sustainable Development for Cities. The Declaration has already been circulated as an official document of this session. I would now like to give you a brief report on some salient points of the forum.

Mr. Chairman,

Participants at the forum had in-depth discussions on effective ways to implement Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and shared their experiences in this regard from the perspective of sustainable development for cities. A widely held view at the forum was that, though urbanization brings with it problems and challenges like excessive population growth, diseases, traffic congestion and environmental pollution, as long as governments at all levels give priority importance to them, focus on immediate tasks at the local level while

keeping in mind a long-term and broader vision, enhance effective governance and policy guidance, and balance the diverse interests and demands of economic growth, environmental protection and other dimensions, it is possible to achieve sustainable development for cities.

Participants at the forum underscored the importance of taking specific local circumstances into account in the promotion of sustainable development for cities. Since natural conditions, cultural and historical background and the levels of economic growth vary from city to city in the Asia-Pacific region, there can be no one-size-fits-all formula for sustainable development. Each city must develop its own strategies, policies and measures of economic development and ecological and environmental protection in the light of its own conditions.

Participants at the forum also emphasized that attention must be given to the impact of public education and public health on sustainable development. Education is the foundation not only of economic development but also of ecological and environmental protection. Governments at all levels must intensify their efforts to ensure basic education, integrate education with the promotion of sustainable development, and raise the awareness of the public and, in particular, the youth, vis-à-vis sustainable development. Participants at the forum also concluded that public health is a fundamental benchmark of sustainable development as well as the basis for the achievement of sustainable development. Therefore, municipal authorities should take the improvement of public health as a point of departure in formulating strategies for sustainable development for cities. All cities should establish and refine their sanitation and epidemic-preventing systems, and enhance exchanges of information in this regard. In addition, participants at the forum indicated the need to establish partnerships among governments, private sector, civil society groups, NGOs and other stakeholders, so as to fully utilize all resources in the promotion of sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

The United Nation Asia-Pacific Leadership Forum: Sustainable Development for Cities held in Hong Kong SAR, China was crowned with success thanks to the efforts of all participants. On behalf of the Chinese Government, I would like to express our gratitude, once again, to the UNDESA for its cooperation, and to all the delegates for their active participation. We hope that the outcomes of this forum will contribute to the discussion of relevant topics at this session of CSD.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.