

Demographic Window and Population Ageing: Challenges and Opportunities Hong Kong SAR, China, May 8, 2004

The Demographic Window pre-meeting is organized by the University of Hong Kong in collaboration with the University of Roma "La Sapienza" in Hong Kong SAR on May 8, 2004. This meeting is held in association with the International Seminar on Demographic Window and Healthy Ageing: Socioeconomic Challenges and Opportunities that will be held in Beijing on May 10-11, 2004. The Beijing seminar, organized by IUSSP and the Asian MetaCentre, will be hosted by the Centre for Healthy Aging and Family Studies at Peking University. Web site is at <http://www.iussp.org/Activities/scc-lon/lon-call04.php>

During the transition from high fertility and rapid population growth to lower fertility and slower growth, the working age population expands relative to the dependent (younger and older) population, opening a window of opportunity for economic growth. Indeed, when fertility declines and young-age dependency ratios quickly follow suit, the ratio of working-age people to dependent people rises as the young population increases more slowly than the working-age population. This window opens as the number of younger children decreases but closes again as the number of older people rises. Most Western European countries are now moving into the later stage of their transition to low fertility and may not benefit from the demographic bonus as the number of older people is already very large. On the contrary, some Asian countries are entering or are only in the middle of the transitional period. Countries can take the advantage from this one-time opportunity for economic growth if they invest appropriately in their human and physical capital and create employment opportunities for youth and work opportunities for women. On the other hand, to the extent that better living and working conditions and better management of chronic conditions dramatically increases life expectancy, the number of old people will inexorably increase in the coming future. Resources needed for old-age support, pensions and health care may increase beyond current expectations. The required adjustment and reforms in the delivery and financing of social services need to be enacted well in advance of the time when larger beneficiary populations will be using them. The timing of these reforms is critical. A combination of economic, social, political and institutional policies is alarmingly needed.

Hong Kong population dynamic has undergone many changes in the past two decade. Hong Kong has the lowest total fertility rate in the world with 0.92 in 2002 and is among the countries with a long life expectancy. It is very challenging for the Government and researchers to map out a strategy to face the acute problem of ageing population. We have invited the Director of Administration of Hong Kong SAR Government, internationally well-known demographers, population economists and local experts to exchange the latest scientific knowledge on population dynamics, the change in population age structure and its impact on economic and social development. The pre-meeting in Hong Kong will be an exciting and rewarding one. The participants attending to the Beijing seminar are cordially welcome to join this pre-meeting.

The following topics will be discussed:

1. The shift of population age structure, global and local perspectives
2. The impact and implication of demographic window and population ageing
3. Health and medical care reform
4. Sustainable pensions and retirement schemes
5. Long term care system and financing

HK Pre-meeting Scientific and Organising committee: Paul Yip (University of Hong Kong, Chair), Iris Chi (Sau Po Centre on Ageing of the University of Hong Kong), Antonio Golini (University of Roma "La Sapienza"), Nelson Chow (University of Hong Kong), Jean-Marie Robine (INSERM, University of Montpellier, Chair of the IUSSP Committee on Health and Longevity), Shripad Tuljapurkar (Stanford University), Siu Lan Karen Cheung (University of Roma "La Sapienza")

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