1. Work of the Census and Statistics Department

1.1 The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) together with statistical units established in various government departments and bureaux form the Government Statistical Service (GSS), representing a network for the provision of government statistical services.

1.2 Broadly speaking, most general-purpose statistics come under the responsibility of C&SD. The statistical units in various government departments and bureaux take care of specific-purpose statistics (for dedicated use in their respective work) and provide necessary support in the application of statistics.

1.3 The Commissioner for Census and Statistics is the Government’s principal adviser on all statistical matters and the head of GSS. On the one hand, he fulfills his responsibilities by being the head of C&SD and, on the other hand, co-ordinates the work of outposted statistical units and monitors their technical standards. He is assisted by a Deputy Commissioner and five Assistant Commissioners in discharging his duties.

1.4 The work of C&SD includes conducting statistical surveys and operating statistical systems for the production of social and economic statistics; performing statistical analysis and disseminating statistical data and analytical results; and providing consultation and support services on statistical matters to various government departments and bureaux.

1.5 Proper understanding of the concepts and definitions of different kinds of statistics is imperative for their correct interpretation and application. Besides providing statistical data to the public, C&SD is also prepared to give advice on the interpretation and application of statistics so as to maximise their utility to users.

1.6 C&SD adopts a programme management structure as a framework to ensure that resources are utilised effectively, efficiently and in the right priorities in support of relevant policy decisions. There are altogether six programmes in the work of the department, which are further broken down into 17 activities. The six departmental programmes are:
(a) Trade Statistics;
(b) Social Statistics;
(c) National Accounts and Balance of Payments Statistics;
(d) General Statistical Services;
(e) Price, Industry and Service Statistics; and
(f) Labour Statistics.

1.7 The resources incurred, main outputs and users of each activity within a programme are clearly spelt out. Users of outputs of each activity include those outside the department and those within the department. External users are distinguished into two sub-groups, viz. clearly identifiable parties and others who can only be identified in broad terms. There are also internal users since one activity may depend on another for input. Such inter-activity linkage is identified and is an essential feature of the programme management structure. New initiatives for improving efficiency and plans for future development are also drawn up. The work programmes are updated annually and represent the cornerstone of corporate planning for C&SD.

2. The Basic Law and the statistical systems of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

2.1 The Government of the People's Republic of China resumed its exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong on 1 July 1997. On this date, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) was established under the “One Country, Two Systems” principle. As stipulated in the Basic Law of HKSAR, Hong Kong would exercise a high degree of autonomy. In respect of statistical work, HKSAR maintains its separate statistical systems and continues to compile and disseminate statistical data about HKSAR. As regards C&SD, it is responsible to the Government of HKSAR only and there is no administrative relationship between it and the corresponding departments in the mainland of China.

3. Statistical and other relevant legislation

3.1 The main legislation governing the work of C&SD is the Census and Statistics Ordinance (C&S Ordinance), which empowers the Commissioner for Census and Statistics to carry out censuses of population and statistical surveys of mandatory or voluntary nature. The Ordinance also provides strict safeguards on the
confidentiality of data pertaining to individuals or undertakings.

3.2 For population censuses and mandatory statistical surveys, respondents are required to provide information as specified and promulgated under relevant Census and Statistics Orders which describe in clear and explicit terms details of the survey coverage and items of enquiry in the survey. For voluntary surveys, advance announcement of their implementation has to be made in notifications in the Government Gazette. The Ordinance contains provision for protection of confidentiality of information in regard to individual persons, households or companies. The provision, which applies to surveys of both mandatory and voluntary nature, is important in securing co-operation of respondents to supply the enquired data.

3.3 Trade statistics constitute a very important part of the work of C&SD. The Import and Export Ordinance stipulates that importers/exporters are required to submit import/export declarations, which provide the main data for compiling trade statistics, in a timely and accurate manner.

3.4 Through enactment of the Ordinances, C&SD is designated with a clear and independent role in collecting, analysing and disseminating statistical information. While being a government department, C&SD is to be distinct from other departments of the Government responsible for policy-making and enforcement activities. This positioning of C&SD in the Government facilitates its work and enables it to be perceived as working in an impartial and objective manner.

3.5 Statistics compiled by other government departments are mainly based on administrative records such as application forms and registers. These statistical activities are regulated by legal provisions under respective subject matter ordinances or administrative systems.

3.6 The Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance serves to protect the privacy rights for personal data. One of the data protection principles is that personal data, without the prescribed consent of the data subject, shall not be used for any purposes other than the purpose for which the data were collected or a directly related purpose. The Ordinance nevertheless allows exemption from the above-mentioned principle if the data are to be used for preparing statistics and if the resulting statistics are not made available in a form which identifies the data subjects.
4. Guiding principles of work for C&SD

4.1 The *vision* of C&SD is to provide high-quality statistical services, contributing to the social and economic developments of Hong Kong. The *mission* of the department is:

(a) To provide adequate, relevant, reliable and timely statistics to facilitate research, discussion, planning and decision making within the government and in the community.

(b) To ensure that the compilation and dissemination of statistics are in accordance with scientific principles, professional ethics and international standards.

(c) To promote a user-based culture, ensuring that users can obtain effective and convenient services.

4.2 The *values* of the department are professionalism, objectivity and neutrality, cost-effectiveness, respect for privacy, progressing with the times and commitment to excellence.

4.3 In carrying out its various activities, the department follows international standards and practices. In this regard, a central piece of reference is the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics adopted in 1994 by the United Nations. In the area of data dissemination, the department also complies with the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) of the International Monetary Fund. In addition, staff of the department also make regular reference to the Declaration of Professional Ethics established by the International Statistical Institute in 1985.

4.4 As a professional department, the department places emphasis on a scientific and professional image, and always works with impartiality, integrity and objectivity. At the same time, great importance is attached to good quality of service, friendliness and smooth communication in providing services to the public.

5. Statistical units in other government departments and bureaux

5.1 Apart from C&SD, statistical staff are posted to 29 government departments and bureaux. Subject matter areas include education, housing, health, social welfare,
law and order, transport and strategic planning, etc. While staff in outposted statistical units are responsible to the departments/bureaux to which they are posted in respect of the day-to-day work, professional advice and assistance are provided to them by C&SD headquarters when it is deemed necessary. Moreover, the outposted staff come under C&SD in such matters as recruitment, training, posting and promotion. Through this arrangement, the quality standard of statistical work across the Government is maintained.

5.2 The principles governing the management of the outposted statistical staff by C&SD embrace both the need to provide support and guidance to the staff concerned and the desirability to monitor and maintain the standard in the work performed by them. A system of functional supervision is in place for managing the outposted statistical staff. While the outposted statistical staff report to their direct supervisors in the host departments (or bureaux) in their day-to-day work, professional officers at appropriate levels in C&SD are designated as statistical functional supervisors of the outposted statistical staff. These functional supervisors keep in view the tasks performed by the outposted statistical staff and give guidance on professional matters whenever necessary. Communication with the host departments is maintained to explain C&SD departmental policies on such matters as posting and training affecting the outposted staff, foster understanding of the statistical work undertaken by the outposted statistical units and help achieve co-ordination on areas of work affecting different departments.

6. Staff training and development

6.1 C&SD attaches great importance to developing its human resources to their full potential through instituting a comprehensive range of training and development (T&D) programmes for its staff. The primary objective of these programmes is to nurture people to maximise individual performance for the effective functioning of the department, thus bringing about a versatile, dynamic, resilient and motivated staff force in the department.

6.2 In order to meet the objective of achieving multiple skills by the staff, the T&D programmes of the department cover the following areas:

(a) Statistical knowledge, both in theory and practice;
(b) Statistical management;
(c) General management;
(d) Subject matter knowledge;
(e) Application of information technology; and
(f) Language and communication skills.

6.3 Most of the department’s T&D programmes are run in-house or in collaboration with other professional bodies while some others are organised by training institutions in the private sector. For professional subjects in particular, staff are sent to attend training courses/workshops, seminars and conferences held locally and overseas. These activities will go a long way in facilitating the sharing of experience and exchange of ideas with scholars and practitioners in statistics outside the department.

6.4 Besides formal programmes, supplementary schemes are also in place to facilitate knowledge consolidation and enhancement among staff members through participation in sharing sessions in their workplace, which in turn helps enhance the effectiveness of various formal T&D activities. For similar purposes, regular and ad hoc sectional meetings and discussions are held at the workplace for generating innovative ideas essential to organisational management and advancement.