

## LCQ12: Supporting participation of persons with disabilities in cultural and arts activities

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Fok and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (May 24):

Question:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises the right of persons with disabilities (PWDs) to equal participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sporting activities. Besides, there are views that instilling concern for the artistic needs of PWDs and developing their artistic abilities can promote social inclusion and enhance the vibrancy of the city. Regarding supporting the participation of PWDs in cultural and arts activities, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that owing to resource constraints, disabled arts groups in Hong Kong are generally smaller in scale, whether the authorities have plans to provide more financial and policy support to PWDs who wish to receive arts training, so as to enable the healthy development of such persons; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it is learnt that due to resource considerations, it is difficult for ordinary cultural and arts performances to include accessibility services for PWDs, such as sign language interpretation and audio description, which is not conducive to the fair participation of PWDs in cultural and arts life, whether the authorities will consider enhancing the terms of the existing cultural and arts funding schemes, and granting additional financial resources to organisations providing accessibility services for PWDs, so as to promote social inclusion; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as the Government set up the Arts Development Fund for Persons with Disabilities (the Arts Fund) with a sum of \$250 million in 2019, and it is learnt that four rounds of funding schemes have been launched under the Fund so far, of the current progress and effectiveness of the various funded projects; and

(4) given that as at December last year, only a total of about \$41 million had been approved under the Arts Fund for the funded projects, whether the authorities will, in view of the substantial amount of surplus of the Arts Fund, (i) promote the Fund to more eligible non-profit-making organisations, (ii) approve funding to more applicant organisations, and (iii) raise the funding ceiling for each project, so as to enhance the effectiveness of the

projects; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB), my consolidated reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The Government considers that persons with disabilities should enjoy the same opportunities and rights to learn, appreciate and participate in the arts as ordinary people do. As such, it has endeavoured to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in cultural and arts activities through the collaboration with relevant arts and charity groups as well as the provision of appropriate support, with a view to giving persons with disabilities the opportunities to develop their potential and enhance their quality of life. Related policy support measures are set out below:

(a) The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has put in place support measures to promote arts development for persons with disabilities, including: (i) organising cultural programmes jointly with arts groups with artists with disabilities; (ii) providing funding support to arts organisations comprising members with disabilities in launching their cultural programmes; (iii) providing special facilities and services at LCSD's cultural venues to facilitate persons with disabilities to participate in and appreciate the arts; and (iv) consulting organisations of persons with disabilities when building new venues so as to continuously enhance accessible facilities at cultural venues;

(b) The Social Welfare Department (SWD) set up the Arts Development Fund for Persons with Disabilities (the Arts Fund) in March 2019 to foster arts development for persons with disabilities. The Arts Fund subsidises eligible organisations to organise various time-limited arts projects or activities for persons with disabilities, including structured and ongoing training, with a view to developing their artistic abilities. The Arts Fund also subsidises eligible organisations to hire professional arts tutors and purchase relevant supplies and technical support services for providing continuous training for persons with disabilities who have potential and nurturing their artistic talents. As at April 2023, the Arts Fund approved an accumulative total of about \$57 million, subsidising 95 arts projects for persons with disabilities;

(c) The Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) also operates various funding schemes which are open for applications from all local organisations, including arts groups and projects aiming at encouraging the participation of persons with disabilities in artistic creation. Since 1995, the HKADC has funded 100 projects for the participation by artists with disabilities at a total amount of about \$15.17 million. The HKADC has also subsidised artists with disabilities and organisations for supporting these artists to take part in outbound arts events with a view to promoting inclusive arts; and

(d) The Hong Kong Arts Festival Society, with funding support from the LCSD, has been inviting overseas and local artists with disabilities to deliver performances under the No Limits annual project co-organised with the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust since 2019. The project also provides arts accessibility services, including accessible subtitles, theatrical interpretation, Cantonese audio description and/or sign language interpretation, for persons with different abilities so that they can engage in barrier-free arts activities, thus promoting social inclusion.

(2) The Government is committed to enhancing the accessibility of cultural and arts programmes and facilitating the participation of persons with disabilities in cultural and arts life through various complementary measures. Related measures taken by the bureaux/departments and statutory organisations concerned include:

(a) The CSTB provides recurrent funding support to major performing arts groups to deliver accessible performances of suitable programmes. Apart from accessible performances with audio description and sign language interpretation, some performing arts groups also deliver arts programmes specifically for persons with special needs, such as those with autism spectrum disorder, intellectual impairment or early dementia. In addition, the CSTB subsidises non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with the Film Development Fund to produce audio description soundtracks for films and to organise film appreciation with audio description specifically for visually impaired persons;

(b) The LCSD will enhance the use of various arts accessibility services in the arts programmes it presents or sponsors, including the provision of accessible subtitles, theatrical interpretation, Cantonese audio description and/or sign language interpretation. In addition, the LCSD works with arts group under venue partnership to provide a relaxed theatre environment for persons with autism spectrum disorder and other learning disabilities or communication difficulties;

(c) As for the SWD's Arts Fund, applicant organisations may, having regard to the needs of persons with disabilities, include accessibility or support services, such as sign language tutors, sign language interpreters, audio describers and accessibility assistants, in the activities (including performances or training programmes) they apply for. If their applications are approved, the Arts Fund will provide funding support for related accessibility or support services;

(d) The HKADC also supports persons with disabilities to participate in and appreciate its funded arts activities. Many arts groups received funding support from the HKADC are providing accessibility services; and

(e) The West Kowloon Cultural District Authority collaborates with special schools, rehabilitation groups, NGOs and accessibility service groups to offer scheduled or on-request accessibility services for persons with disabilities, including audio description, sign language interpretation, theatrical interpretation, accessible guided tours, tactile aids and tactile

guided tours.

(3) The Arts Fund has already launched four batches of applications since 2019, with an accumulative total approving amount of about \$57 million, which was allocated to 64 service units to implement 95 funded projects. As at April 2023, all activities of 40 funded projects were completed. Positive feedback on the funded projects was received from the participating service units, persons with disabilities and their families. Besides, most of the participating service units showcase the art pieces or arts training outcomes of persons with disabilities by means of exhibitions or performances so as to let the public know more about their potential in the arts.

(4) As at April 2023, the Arts Fund approved an accumulative amount of about \$57 million covering a total of 95 arts projects. There are two tiers for the grants of the Arts Fund. The maximum grant for Tier One projects is \$0.75 million while there is no ceiling of the approved amount for Tier Two projects. The Grants Sub-committee (GSC) under the Arts Fund will vet all applications and allocate grants according to pre-determined criteria. The GSC is composed of representatives from different sectors, including the financial, social service, arts and medical sectors, as well as persons with disabilities.

To promote the Arts Fund, the Secretariat to the Fund has continually held briefing sessions to introduce the Fund and application methods, and produced a short video which features interviews with persons with disabilities participating in funded projects and showcases their learning outcomes. The Secretariat will continue to hold briefing sessions to let more organisations to learn about the Fund. The Arts Fund has planned to launch a new batch (fifth batch) of applications in mid-2023 to continue supporting more organisations in implementing arts projects.