

CHAPTER 5

THE WAY FORWARD

SETTING THE DIRECTION

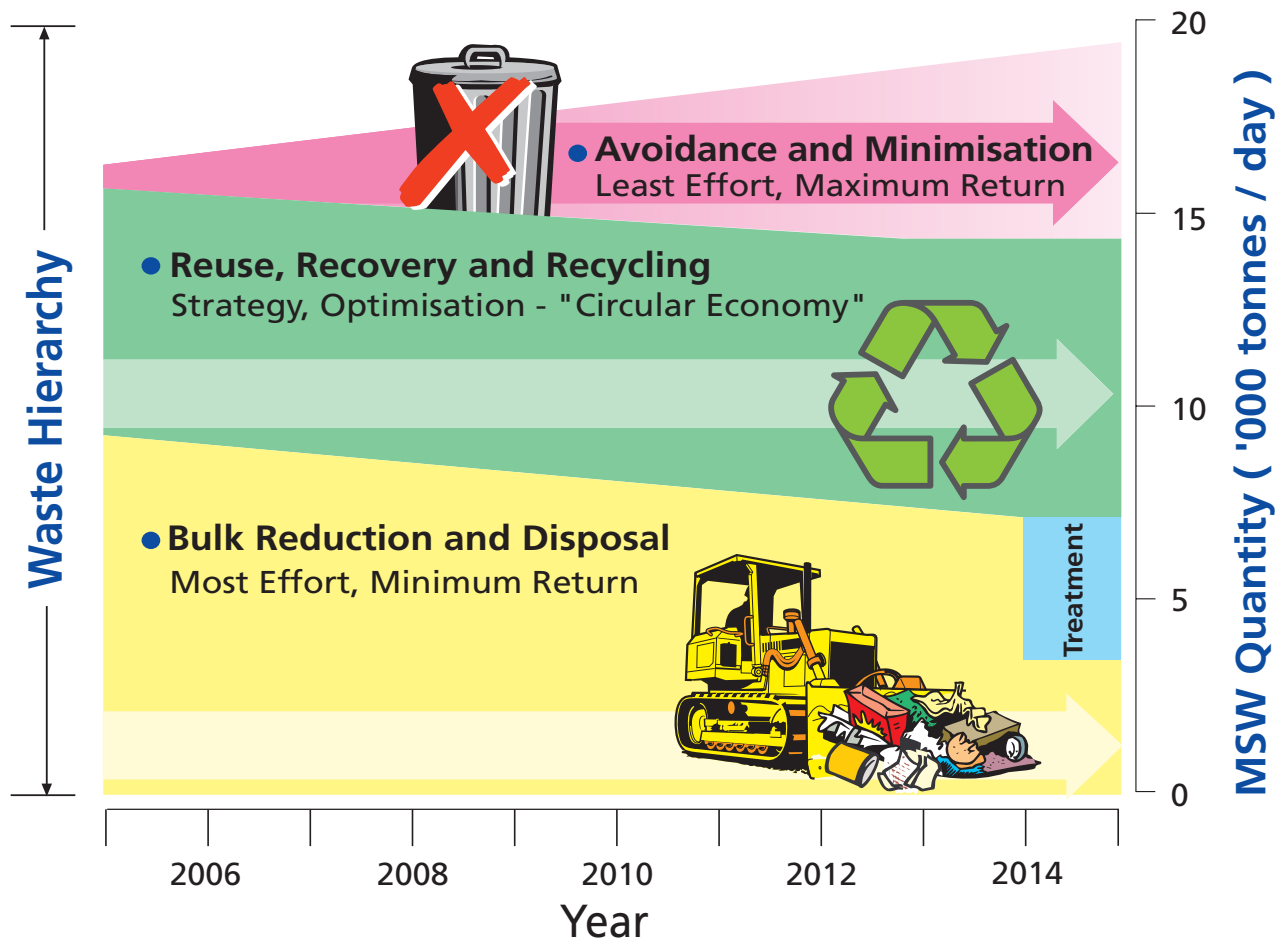
- 116. Status quo is not an option.** Hong Kong will exhaust its landfill space in the next 6 to 10 years. Land is scarce in Hong Kong, and must be used wisely. We must find a sustainable system to manage our MSW. We will continue to adopt a three-tier approach to MSW management, namely: i) avoidance and minimisation; ii) reuse, recovery and recycling; and iii) bulk reduction and disposal. The Government's focus is, and will continue to be, on waste avoidance and recovery, but bolder steps have to be taken to improve the already high recovery rate.
- 117. The Government must take the lead, while the public must take ownership.** The Government cannot solve the MSW problem alone. The public must recognize the problem and work together to achieve a sustainable way of life. The SDC has engaged a wide range of stakeholders in an open, honest and broad-based discussion. This Policy Framework for the ten years from 2005 to 2014 proposes the milestones to be met by the Government and the public hand-in-hand.

HOW THE STRATEGY WILL WORK

- 118. MSW management must follow the "polluter-pays" principle.** Making polluters pay makes sense from both economic and environmental angles. The Government has made significant headway in putting the "polluter-pays" principle at work in our charging scheme on construction wastes. Yet, the absence of a charging scheme for MSW, which is now dealt with by the public purse, has fed a consumption-led lifestyle where old or surplus items are casually thrown away. The environmental cost must return to the equation in order to close the loop for a "circular economy".
- 119.** We propose to impose an explicit charge on MSW so that everyone can fully appreciate the significant environmental costs entailed by a consumption-

led lifestyle. Placing a charge on MSW makes everyone in Hong Kong think twice when making purchasing and disposal decisions that will benefit their bottom line and also to make a commitment to Hong Kong's well-being. It is this change in people's attitudes towards waste and purchasing and disposal habits that is paramount in reducing the flow of MSW to landfills.

- 120. PRSs should be put in place to ensure that “end-of-life” products are recycled or properly treated.** To complement our efforts in minimizing and reducing waste through the charging scheme, the community, including the consumers, the retailers, the importers and the producers, must accept the responsibility for recycling and treating “end-of-life” products and materials in a sustainable manner. Overseas experience has shown that PRSs not only divert a significant portion of MSW away from precious landfills, but also help nurture a recycling industry that creates jobs and generates economic growth. As an advanced economy with green conscience, Hong Kong should put PRSs in place.
- 121. Landfill disposal bans can further protect our precious landfills.** To render our landfills more stable and alleviate long-term environmental problems, we propose to ban specific products and materials at landfills. Such bans would complement our efforts in PRSs so that a stable source of used products and materials can be fed to sustain our recycling industry in the long run.
- 122. We shall adopt state-of-the-art technology to treat unavoidable waste.** While our best efforts would be made in reducing and recycling waste, the reality is that there will still be unavoidable waste that needs proper treatment before disposal at the landfills. Hong Kong should adopt state-of-the-art technology to treat unavoidable waste in a cost-effective, yet environmentally sustainable, manner. To catch up with international trends, we propose incineration, which has been widely adopted overseas, as the core technology for our final waste treatment, while, of course, adopting stringent emission standards that command public confidence.



123. Legislation and education are complementary to our policy tools.

We need to put in place appropriate legislation to implement our policy tools. Yet, enforcement and sanction can only have limited success without the public taking ownership of the problem. Thus, sustained education programme is indispensable in our overall strategy so that the community at large is part of the solution of MSW management.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

124. Hong Kong's strategy towards sustainable MSW management is underpinned by waste charging, PRSs and landfill disposal bans. The Policy Framework shows how these policy tools come together to achieve our overall objective.

125. MSW management is a top priority in our policy agenda. It is now the time to step up our efforts in tackling the imminent MSW problem. We have set out in this Policy Framework the proposed action plan. We sincerely invite the community at large to share our vision and tackle the problem at source. Only through a shared vision and concerted efforts of the Government and the public can we guarantee success in resolving our MSW problem.



OUR FUTURE IS IN OUR HANDS

- 126. Let us plant the seed of quality life for our future generations together.** Sustainable MSW management is not only about solving an imminent problem, but also about a long-term investment for our future generations. It is neither economically nor morally sound to burden our children with cleaning up the mess we leave behind. This Policy Framework calls for a wide range of actions, and more importantly, an investment that is guaranteed a multi-fold return for our children and their children. We invite you all to face up to the challenge of changing our habits, and work together to ensure that the vibrancy, prosperity and natural beauty of Hong Kong is not a memory in the past, but a reality in the future.