

# An Overview of Hong Kong's Waste Management Policy

- 2.1** The waste management policy of Hong Kong has evolved in tandem with the social development of the city. Up to the early 2000s, the objective of the policy was largely to properly collect and handle MSW. It has since evolved into a multi-pronged approach, with the objective to create a sustainable waste management system in recent years.

## Realignment of Waste Treatment Facilities in 1989

- 2.2** In 1989, the Government took a major decision to phase out the three outdated incinerators in Kwai Chung, Kennedy Town and Lai Chi Kok; as well as retiring landfills that were scattered across the territory. In replacement, three strategic landfills, in West New Territories, Southeast New Territories and Northeast New Territories came into operation in 1993, 1994 and 1995 respectively. The development of the strategic landfills has taken the benefits of advancement in landfill technology. They are equipped with state-of-art liners, leachate collection and treatment systems, landfill gas management systems, and surface and ground water management systems to respond to the more stringent environmental requirements.

## The MSW Policy Framework and Subsequent Progress

- 2.3** With a growing awareness for a sustainable waste management policy, the Government issued *The MSW Policy Framework* in 2005, setting out a multi-pronged approach for waste management. The major initiatives include avoidance and reduction of waste; reuse, recover and recycle; as well as reduction of waste volume in disposal.
- 2.4** We launched the Programme on Source Separation of Domestic Waste in 2005, targeting domestic buildings across Hong Kong. It encourages and supports property management offices (“PMOs”) in housing estates and individual buildings to provide waste separation facilities in common areas - on each building floor if possible. Over time, the types of recyclables recovered under the programme have been expanded from waste paper, aluminum cans and plastic bottles to a much more diverse range of recyclables, including all types of

plastic waste such as PSBs and compact discs, metal waste, used clothes, waste electrical and electronic equipment (“WEEE”), etc. The programme has been expanding to cover more than 1 700 estates and about 700 rural villages since its launch in 2005, reaching over 80% of Hong Kong’s population. It has also helped to drive recovery rates higher. In 2010, the domestic waste recovery rate was 40%, more than double the rate of 16% in 2005.

**2.5** Experience suggests that source separation is most effective when relevant facilities are provided on each building floor. However, many buildings in Hong Kong do not have enough space to accommodate such facilities and only about 20% of participating estates have floor-based separation. To promote the development of floor-based facilities, the Building (Refuse Storage and Material Recovery Chambers and Refuse Chutes) Regulations (Cap.123H) was amended in 2008 requiring a refuse storage and material recovery room to be provided on every floor of new domestic buildings and the domestic part of composite buildings.

**2.6** In October 2007 we extended our efforts to the C&I sector through the launch of the Programme on Source Separation of Commercial and Industrial Waste. Similar to the domestic sector programme, the property managers of C&I buildings are encouraged to set up and implement mechanisms for separating and recovering waste. Member buildings that meet the Government’s assessment measures are given a commendation certificate; those with an outstanding performance are further recognized with specific awards. In 2010, we achieved a recovery rate of 66% for C&I waste, up from 63% in 2005.

**2.7** Apart from the programmes to separate waste at source for reuse and recycling, the Government has also promoted waste reduction and recovery through such initiatives as –

- (a) *Introduction of PRS.* PRSs can help reduce waste by making manufacturers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers share in the responsibility to reduce, recover and recycle certain products. Several voluntary PRSs of different scales have been introduced over the years for rechargeable batteries, computers, fluorescent lamps and glass containers. The Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance (Cap.603) was enacted in July 2008 to provide a legal basis for introducing mandatory PRSs. The first scheme was launched in July 2009 to introduce an environmental levy on PSBs and would be extended to cover the entire retail industry. On the other hand, a second mandatory PRS is being developed for WEEE.

- (b) *Enhancement of Publicity and Public Education.* Public participation is essential to any waste recovery programme. The Government has been supporting the Environment and Conservation Fund (“ECF”) which finances community-wide educational activities on waste recovery. For example, \$10 million was set aside under the ECF to promote environmental initiatives under *The MSW Policy Framework*, including public education. The Government also injected \$1 billion into the ECF in 2008 for educational, research and technology demonstration projects, including those on waste reduction and recovery, as part of its commitment to promote and support public engagement. One of the key recipients of ECF funding is the Environmental Campaign Committee, which has been providing newly designed waste separation bins to housing estates, C&I buildings and schools, as well as collection points for recyclables in public places.
- (c) *Development of the EcoPark.* Recyclable waste needs an outlet. Well over 90% of Hong Kong’s recyclable waste is exported for processing. To encourage the development of the local recycling industry, the Government has established the EcoPark in Tuen Mun, offering long-term land at affordable costs to the local environmental and recycling industries.

## The 2011 Action Agenda on MSW Management

**2.8** The Government announced a specific action agenda in January 2011, comprising a series of waste management initiatives. The action agenda was formulated after reviewing the initiatives launched since 2005 under *The MSW Policy Framework* and re-examining the priority taking into account the imminence of introducing a sustainable strategy in the light of the filling up of the three strategic landfills and the increased burden posed by waste types such as food waste, in addition to individual consumer products. Under the multi-pronged approach of waste reduction; recovery; and proper treatment, we have committed to –

- (a) revising upward the MSW recovery target to 55% by 2015 through stepping up publicity and promotional efforts on waste reduction and recycling;
- (b) expediting legislative proposals to introduce new PRS and extend current PRS to encourage waste reduction;
- (c) engaging the public in continued discussions on possible options to introduce MSW charging as a direct economic disincentive to reduce waste at source;
- (d) stepping up efforts for community-level on-site food waste treatment; and

- (e) seeking funding approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council in early 2012 so that advanced waste treatment facilities and extension of the existing landfills will be commissioned in time to ensure solid waste can continue to be properly managed in an environmentally acceptable manner.

**2.9** So far, we have completed the public consultation on the extension of the Environmental Levy Scheme on Plastic Shopping Bags. Implementation details of the mandatory PRS on WEEE are being developed in conjunction with the relevant trades. Planning of the advanced waste treatment facilities and the extension to existing landfills are underway as scheduled. We are also enhancing our other work in order to achieve the waste recovery target of 55% by 2015.