

**Confirmed Minutes of the 176th Meeting of
the Advisory Council on the Environment
held on 17 January 2011 at 2:30 pm**

Present:

Prof Paul LAM, JP (Chairman)
Prof CHAU Kwai-cheong, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Dr Dorothy CHAN, BBS
Prof FUNG Tung
Mr Edwin LAU, MH
Prof LI Xiang-dong
Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok, BBS, MH, JP
Dr MAN Chi-sum, JP
Miss Yolanda NG
Dr Alfred TAM
Mr TSANG Kam-lam, JP
Dr Carrie WILLIS, SBS, JP
Ms Pansy YAU
Dr YAU Wing-kwong
Dr Ray YEP
Prof Ignatius YU
Mr Carlson K S CHAN, JP (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Ms Teresa AU
Mr Oscar CHOW
Ms Betty HO
Mr Michael JEBSEN, BBS
Prof Joseph LEE
Prof WONG Ming-hung
Mr Simon WONG, JP

In Attendance:

Ms Anissa WONG, JP	Permanent Secretary for the Environment
Mr Y K CHAN	Acting Assistant Director (Conservation), Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Mr C T LING	Assistant Director/Technical Services, Planning Department
Ms Esther LI	Acting Principal Information Officer, Environmental Protection Department (EPD)
Ms Josephine CHEUNG	Chief Executive Officer (CBD), EPD

Mr Steve TSOI
Miss Kim KWAN

Executive Officer (CBD), EPD
Executive Manager (CBD), EPD

In Attendance for Agenda Item 4:

Mr Albert LAM, JP
Mr Elvis AU, JP

Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2), EPD
Assistant Director (Nature Conservation and
Infrastructure Planning), EPD

Dr Ellen CHAN, JP
Dr Alain LAM

Assistant Director (Environmental Infrastructure), EPD
Acting Assistant Director (Waste Management Policy),
EPD

Action

Agenda Item 1 : Welcome remarks, general briefing on operation of the Council and formation of Subcommittees

The Chairman welcomed Prof Li Xiang-dong, Miss Yolanda Ng, Dr Carrie Willis and Ms Pansy Yau who had newly joined the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE). He also expressed a note of thanks to Mr Michael Lee who had retired from the Council.

2. The Chairman gave a general briefing to the new members on the operation of the ACE, including its functions, meeting schedule and arrangements, open sessions of some meetings, declaration of interests, rules of voting, the need to maintain confidentiality of classified documents and uphold the integrity and professionalism of the Council, and operation of the three Subcommittees, etc.

3. The Chairman informed Members that 15 Members had signed up for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Subcommittee, 12 for the Nature Conservation Subcommittee and 11 for the Waste Management Subcommittee. Non-Subcommittee Members were welcome to join the Subcommittee meetings if they had interest in a certain subject but they should not vote in case voting was taken.

4. The Chairman informed Members that the Subcommittee Chairpersons were to be elected among Members. As an established practice, there was also a Deputy Chairman for the EIA Subcommittee in view of the statutory role of the ACE under the EIA Ordinance. To facilitate the arrangement

of the first Subcommittee meeting, Members agreed to elect the Chairmen/Deputy Chairman of the Subcommittees during the break of the meeting.

(Note: The Chairman announced after the break that Mr Tsang Kam-lam and Prof Chau Kwai-cheong were elected as the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the EIA Subcommittee respectively, Prof Chau Kwai-cheong was elected as the Chairman of the Nature Conservation Subcommittee and Prof Wong Ming-hung was elected as the Chairman of the Waste Management Subcommittee.)

Agenda Item 2 : Confirmation of the draft minutes of the 175th meeting held on 13 December 2010

5. The draft minutes were confirmed without amendments.

Agenda Item 3 : Matters arising from the minutes of the 175th meeting held on 13 December 2010

6. There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

Agenda Item 4 : Update on the progress of the key initiatives in the “Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014)” (ACE Paper 1/2011)

7. Mr Albert Lam briefed Members on the Administration’s strategies and the updated action plan to tackle the imminent waste problem in Hong Kong.

8. A Member noted that about 3,300 tonnes of food waste, out of 9,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste (MSW), were disposed of at landfills per day. He asked whether a target on the reduction of food waste would be set. He and another Member asked whether there was a plan to mandate the provision of refuse storage for food waste on every floor of new domestic buildings. Mr Albert Lam said that two organic waste treatment facilities (OWTFs) were under planning and would be commissioned in 2014 and 2016 respectively to provide a total treatment capacity of 500 tonnes/day. Reference had been made to overseas experience on the strategies in handling food waste. The primary target group was the commercial and industrial (C&I) sector where the food waste could be more easily separated at source for collection. By making reference to the experience in some private residential developments, actions were being taken to

promote on-site waste composting at hotels, shopping malls with restaurants and other premises; funding schemes were also being developed under the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) to support the operation of on-site food waste treatment at housing estates.

9. A Member considered that more OWTFs at district level should be set up for the local community to share the responsibilities and as part of environmental education. Another Member supported the provision of funding to promote on-site composting at housing estates as a short-term measure. He suggested allocating a certain amount of funding from ECF for the purpose rather than requiring individual housing estates to apply for the fund. As many parties were eager to set up these facilities, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) could perform the facilitating role. In the long run, it was necessary to set up more large-scale OWTFs in view of the large amount of food waste.

10. A Member noted that the amount of food waste from the C&I sector was on the upward trend. He considered that the two OWTFs with a total capacity of 500 tonnes/day would not be sufficient to meet the demand. Planning work should start early for setting up more large-scale centralized OWTFs. Mr Albert Lam said that site search would be launched for planning more OWTFs to meet the demand.

11. As regards the on-site waste composting facilities, a Member considered that siting of these facilities was important as poor operation might give rise to odour problem. It would be useful to liaise with relevant departments to make room for siting the facilities, such as locations near Refuse Collection Points. EPD could also compile technical guidelines to facilitate the setting up and operation of the facilities. Mr Elvis Au said that funding scheme under ECF was being developed to support the operation of on-site food waste treatment at private housing estates. Joint site visits with the Chairman of ECF Waste Recovery Projects Vetting Subcommittee had been conducted to existing facilities with a view to developing guidelines for applicants on aspects such as siting, technical requirements for odour control, operation conditions and funding requirements. The target was to finalize the guidelines in February 2011 to facilitate the submission of applications. As regards public housing estates, actions were being taken to liaise with the Housing Department and Housing Authority on the setting up of the facilities. The initial feedback was positive. Seminars were also held for the commercial sectors to promote food waste

handling and treatment.

12. A Member considered that it was necessary to look for alternative ways in recycling food waste, such as treatment to produce animal feed or fish food, in order to further promote recycling of food waste. The Chairman agreed and he noted that there were operators in the market collecting food waste for recycling as fish food. Another Member considered that there was a need to promote change in eating style to avoid ordering too much food. As regards the outlets, there was room for utilizing the compost as fertilizers since about 75% of the area in Hong Kong was countryside. A Member shared the views. He noted that there was a shortage of organic fertilizers in the market and considered that the compost could be used for organic farming after reducing the level of salinity.

13. A Member considered that the whole community should share the responsibility to solve the problem of MSW. On the promotion of recycling, regional cooperation was required for sourcing outlets of recyclable waste, such as compost from food waste and recyclable components from Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). He asked whether the Administration had enlisted cross-border cooperation with the Mainland on this aspect. Mr Albert Lam explained that there were on-going dialogues with relevant authorities in the Mainland. The recycling industry in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) area was growing fast and they were looking for business opportunities. Different views were received during the public consultation for Producer Responsibility Scheme (PRS) on WEEE. Some considered that we should have sufficient local treatment capability with appropriate technology to tackle the problem locally rather than exporting it elsewhere. Some considered that regional cooperation should be strengthened. The Administration would give due consideration to such views with a view to developing a mutually beneficial mechanism within the framework of relevant international conventions and national legislation on import and export of recyclable waste.

14. A Member agreed that cooperation with relevant parties in the PRD area should be further strengthened to make the local recycling industry commercially viable and competitive. Recycling industry was actively promoted by the Guangdong Provincial Government. The Hong Kong Government should take a proactive role to explore the possibility of implementing pilot schemes of

cooperation on this aspect. Moreover, she noted that the paper put much emphasis on reduction of waste by means of disincentives but not much was mentioned about incentives. Overseas experience showed that incentive schemes were very effective in encouraging sorting of waste at household levels. Facilities to encourage source separation at the household level in Hong Kong were also limited. She considered it important to launch a territory-wide strategic scheme to introduce incentives and provide facilities to encourage source separation at household level.

15. Dr Ellen Chan explained that a series of measures would be taken to achieve the target of increasing the MSW recovery rate from 49% to 55% by 2015. Publicity and promotional efforts would be stepped up to enhance the overall participation rate of source separation. Incentive schemes, such as certificate awards and waste exchange programmes, would be targeted at housing estates and residential buildings. More community recycling centers would be set up at district level to encourage waste separation, especially for old districts and single buildings.

16. Regarding the PRS, a Member enquired about the plan for launching the schemes for packaging waste and beverage containers which constituted a relatively large portion of MSW. He considered that actions should be taken to expedite the legislative process for reducing these types of waste. Mr Albert Lam explained that the Administration would roll out a consultation exercise in 2011 on the way forward of PRS on Plastic Shopping Bags and would, on the basis of the public consultation completed in 2010, engage with relevant trades in developing the implementation details of the new PRS on WEEE. On the other hand, continuous efforts would be made to promote voluntary schemes for other types of waste, such as packaging waste, glass bottles and rechargeable batteries.

17. A Member agreed that actions should be taken to expedite the introduction of PRS on packaging waste which accounted for about 20% of MSW. While resources would be focused on the PRSs on Plastic Shopping Bags and WEEE in the coming year, actions should be taken in parallel to kick-start the research and preparatory works for PRS on packaging waste. Mr Albert Lam explained that in-house research was being conducted for other PRSs and views from the Council would be sought in due course.

18. As regards MSW charging, a Member considered that it would be an effective economic means to reduce waste at source. The rate of increase in waste generation in Hong Kong was higher than that of other Southeast Asian countries which had implemented MSW charging schemes. Experience showed that less waste would be generated with the introduction of charging schemes which would help relieve the pressure on waste treatment and disposal. Early actions should be taken to implement MSW charging for waste reduction. Mr Albert Lam said that the Council would continue to be consulted on the proposal of MSW charging. Public engagement would be required on the principles and practicalities of various MSW charging options.

19. A Member noted the urgency of implementing the initiatives. He was concerned about the prospect of rolling out the initiatives during the timing of election in the coming year, in particular the charging schemes. To solicit public support, he considered that it would be useful to let the public know how the revenue collected from the charging schemes would be used, such as for research or public education purposes. Another Member agreed that this would let the public know that the revenue collected would be channeled to help improve the environment. For example, incentives or subsidies could be provided to every household for managing food waste which would be an effective and tangible means to change lifestyle and mindset.

20. A Member observed that there was resistance at the local community level to the siting of waste treatment facilities. He considered that the possibility of introducing a differential charging scheme should be explored to gain support from the local community. Another Member suggested that the initial level of charge be set at a lower level in order to gain public acceptance and send a clear message that the purpose of the charging schemes was not to increase government revenue.

21. A Member noted that about 900 tonnes of sludge was disposed of at landfills per day but the Sludge Treatment Facilities (STF) with capacity of up to 2,000 tonnes/day would be set up. Dr Ellen Chan explained that the design capacity of the STF included the amount of sludge to be generated from different phases of the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme and upgrading of existing secondary sewerage treatment works.

22. A Member noted that about 3,200 tonnes of construction waste were disposed of at landfills per day. He considered that more measures should be taken to reduce the amount of construction waste. Another Member shared his views. He referred to Annex C of the paper and asked about the possibility of banning the disposal of recyclable construction waste at landfills. Mr Albert Lam explained that since the introduction of the Construction Waste Disposal Charging Scheme in 2006, the amount of construction waste disposed of at landfills had significantly reduced. In Annex C of the paper, the amount of construction waste was assumed to be constant before and after the development of the integrated waste management facilities (IWMF) and OWTFs. The Administration would continuously monitor the effectiveness of the charging scheme.

23. A Member noted that the anticipated amount of remaining MSW not incinerated after the development of the first IWMF and two OWTFs was about 4,500 tonnes/day. He considered that further efforts should be made to reduce the amount of recyclable waste being disposed of at the landfills. In the long run, recyclable waste should be banned for disposal at landfills to ensure that the landfills were reserved for unavoidable waste. Another Member shared his views.

24. Ms Anissa Wong said that the information in Annex C of the paper presented a holistic view of waste disposed of at landfills before and after the completion of waste treatment facilities on the basis of current planning. The facilities included the first phase IWMF with a capacity of 3,000 tonnes/day for MSW, two OWTFs with a total capacity of 500 tonnes/day for food waste and STF with a capacity of up to 2,000 tonnes/day for sludge. Upon the completion of the facilities, disposal at landfills was still required for construction waste and special waste which were non-combustible, remaining MSW not incinerated as well as residual ashes after incineration. While there was room to construct more waste treatment facilities and to encourage greater waste reduction, we could not under-estimate the challenges in overcoming the resistance on siting of unpopular facilities and in shaping behaviour changes. Notwithstanding these, with public support and building of consensus in the community, actions would be taken to develop more modern waste treatment facilities to further reduce the amount of waste to be disposed of at landfills.

25. A Member considered that public education aiming at changing mindset and lifestyle was an essential part of the action plan for tackling the waste problem. She asked about the overall plan on this aspect. Another Member agreed that public education was of vital importance and it should start from childhood. Apart from including environmental protection in the school curriculum, other aspects of education should also be strengthened, such as management of waste and lunch boxes in school. A long-term strategy on public education was required. Mr Albert Lam said that there were on-going efforts on public education and publicity campaigns with the support of green groups and funding from ECF. Much emphasis was put on education in schools, including green lunch initiatives and waste management schemes.

26. A Member considered that the support of all government departments, such as by setting pledges on waste reduction targets, was important to demonstrate the Administration's commitment to tackle the waste problem. Another Member agreed that it would be effective for the Government to take the lead and set an example on implementing various environmental initiatives. For example, on-site food waste composting facilities could be set up in official residences, government quarters and housing estates.

27. The Chairman summarized Members' views as follows –

- (a) the Council welcomed the Administration's strategies and updated action plan on the management of MSW. The Council agreed that Hong Kong faced an imminent and serious waste management problem and it required the community's concerted efforts to tackle the problem;
- (b) the Council supported the increase in the waste recovery targets to 55% by 2015 and considered that clear targets should also be set for various initiatives;
- (c) the Council considered that actions should be taken to expedite the introduction of PRSs, especially PRSs on packaging waste and beverage containers;
- (d) the Council agreed that the MSW Charging Scheme should be formulated with an objective for waste reduction at source and

actions should be taken early to engage the public on the principles and framework of implementation, including the level of charge and means to channel the revenue collected to help improve the environment;

- (e) the Council supported the development of advanced waste treatment facilities for bulk waste treatment and disposal. In view of the large amount of food waste, it was necessary to promote on-site composting as well as setting up more large-scale OWTFs;
- (f) the Council considered that the Government should take a proactive role in strengthening regional collaboration to promote the development of local recycling industries and source outlets for recyclable waste. To further enhance source separation at household level, a territory-wide strategic scheme should be launched to introduce incentives and provide facilities;
- (g) the Council considered that public education was an indispensable part of the overall strategy to instill change in mindset, lifestyle and behaviour;
- (h) the Council suggested that the Government should show its commitment to reduce waste by setting examples, such as pledging waste reduction targets and setting up on-site food composting facilities in official residences, government quarters and housing estates; and
- (i) the Council noted that while construction waste was not part of MSW, further actions should be taken to reduce the disposal of recyclable construction waste at landfills. In the long run, the landfills should be reserved for unavoidable waste.

Agenda Item 5: Any other business

Tentative items for discussion at the next meeting

28. The Chairman informed Members that the agenda was being compiled and Members would be informed in due course.

Agenda Item 6 : Date of next meeting

29. The Chairman informed Members that the next meeting was scheduled for 21 February 2011.

(Post-meeting note: The meeting scheduled for 21 February 2011 was cancelled.)

**ACE Secretariat
February 2011**