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Public Consultation on Initial Proposals for the Regional Cooperation Plan on Building a Quality Living Area

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of a three-month public consultation being conducted by the Administration starting from 1 September 2011 on the initial proposals for the Regional Cooperation Plan on Building a Quality Living Area (the Plan). The consultation document (English and Chinese versions) and its summary (English and Chinese versions) are at **Annexes A to D** respectively.

BACKGROUND

2. At the 11th Plenary of the Hong Kong-Guangdong Co-operation Joint Conference in August 2008, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong SAR and the Governor of Guangdong agreed that joint strategies would be drawn up to transform the Greater Pearl River Delta (PRD) region into a low-carbon, high-technology and low-pollution city cluster of quality living. The Chief Executive also proposed to transform the Greater PRD region into a green and quality living area in his 2008/09 Policy Address. This important strategic initiative was subsequently embraced in the "Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the Pearl River Delta (PRD) (2008-2020)" released in January 2009, the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation signed in April 2010,

and also the “Outline of the Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China” promulgated in March 2011.

3. In October 2009, Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao jointly commenced the study for the compilation of the Plan, focusing on the long-term regional cooperation directions of the Greater PRD region.

4. During the study process, Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao have been collecting stakeholders’ views through different channels on the various topics to be covered by the Plan. For example, discussion fora involving relevant experts and academics were conducted at the three places from April to May 2010. The Environment Bureau also presented the proposals on environmental protection and ecological conservation cooperation under the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation to the Legislative Council, the Advisory Council on the Environment, and the green groups between May and July 2010, and the views collected have been suitably incorporated into the consultation document.

INITIAL COOPERATION PROPOSALS

5. The Regional Cooperation Plan on Building a Quality Living Area aims to transform the Greater PRD region into an exemplar cluster of green cities for quality living. Building on existing cooperation efforts among the three sides, the consultation document sets out a list of initial cooperation proposals covering the following areas-

- (a) improving the environmental and ecological quality;
- (b) promoting low-carbon development;
- (c) cooperation in culture and livelihood issues;
- (d) coordinated spatial development; and
- (e) green transportation development and convenient boundary crossing arrangements.

Enhancing Environmental Quality and Ecology

Strengthening and Improving the Ecosystems

6. To effectively protect the environment and natural resources, and to address the serious challenges in preserving ecological areas in the course of regional development, it is proposed that Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao should take joint actions to strengthen and improve the ecosystems across the whole region. Key cooperation proposals include-

- (a) planning and coordinating regional ecological protection for the Robin's Nest in Hong Kong and Shenzhen Wutong Shan National Forest Park; jointly undertaking ecological baseline studies to find out the regional biodiversity, its community characteristics and spatial distribution for providing the necessary background information and data for formulating management initiatives in the future;
- (b) carrying out, in collaboration with research institutions, monitoring and baseline research programmes on the ecology and functions of the wetland systems in Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site in Hong Kong and Futian National Nature Reserve in Shenzhen; and
- (c) devising a joint management plan for the protection and conservation of the Chinese White Dolphins habitats at Lingding Bay.

Improving Water Quality of the Pearl River Basin and Estuary

7. Taking into account the challenges in protecting water quality in the Greater PRD region, it is proposed that the three sides should jointly introduce comprehensive water quality management measures for the Pearl River Basin and Estuary. Such efforts will help resolve prominent water quality issues and progressively restore the water environment in the region. This will also contribute to the setting up of a long-term water quality management framework across different administrative boundaries. Key cooperation proposals include-

- (a) enhancing water quality management and water pollution control;
- (b) embarking on collaboration on regional water pollution control, such as strengthening the development of the supporting works and facilities for water quality control and strengthening the monitoring mechanism to control water pollution; and
- (c) strengthening cooperation in improving the quality of adjoining waters, such as jointly determining a set of more stringent targets for protecting the water environment; jointly setting up a water quality monitoring network and improving the information sharing mechanisms.

Improving Air Quality

8. In tackling the air pollution problem in the Greater PRD region, it is proposed that Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao should continue to collaborate closely to undertake enhanced air quality improvement and control measures. Key cooperation proposals include-

- (a) based on the Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Management Plan (2002-2010), Guangdong and Hong Kong to complete the joint study on the arrangements for reducing air pollutant emissions in Hong Kong and the PRD region for 2011-2020 with a view to progressively reducing the emission levels of major air pollutants in Hong Kong and the PRD region to below those of 2010;
- (b) progressively adopt fuel and emission standards for motor vehicles and vessels which are more advanced than those in the Mainland;
- (c) conducting joint study on controlling air pollution from vessels in the Greater PRD waters, including the compilation of an emissions inventory on vessels;
- (d) formulating cooperation plans to reduce air pollutant emissions from vessels by exploring the feasibility of using cleaner energy

by vessels berthing at the Greater PRD ports such as using low sulphur fuel or onshore power; and exploring in the longer-term the feasibility of setting up an “Emission Control Area” in the Greater PRD waters;

- (e) enhancing the regional air quality monitoring network, for example increasing the monitoring stations and monitoring parameters; and
- (f) carrying out scientific research and studies on regional air pollution control, including the compilation of emission sources inventory for air pollutant emissions in the Greater PRD region.

Promoting Low-carbon Development

9. To accelerate the pace of economic transformation and to achieve balanced and coordinated development in the Greater PRD region, it is proposed that the three sides should join hands in establishing low-carbon development cooperation mechanism; enhancing cleaner production in the region; strengthening cooperation in the development of environmental industries; supporting the development of new energy and renewable energy; and developing clean energy supply and related infrastructure. Key cooperation proposals include-

- (a) **low-carbon development cooperation mechanism:** enhancing buildings energy efficiency by formulating and promoting green building standards; encouraging existing buildings to carry out greening and energy improvement works; requiring public sector development projects to lead in implementing energy efficiency measures; and promoting further development of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in the Greater PRD region;
- (b) **enhancing cleaner production in the region:** further promoting the Cleaner Production Partnership Programme (CPPP); giving recognition to enterprises which actively pursue cleaner production as “Hong Kong-Guangdong Cleaner Production Partners”; promulgating practical guidelines on cleaner production; and opening up the PRD market for cleaner

production technologies and consultation services to Hong Kong and Macao service providers;

- (c) **development of environmental industries:** promoting and developing the market for environmental technologies and services in the Greater PRD region, and fostering cross-boundary cooperation in the recycling of reusable materials subject to compliance with national legislation and environmental standards;
- (d) **development of new energy and renewable energy:** conducting assessment on the potential of new energy industries; formulation of measures which are beneficial to the development of new energy and renewable energy industries; promoting the wider use of new energy and renewable energy products, with particular focus on new energy vehicles by setting up public charging networks and designating priority parking spaces in public carparks; and
- (e) **development of clean energy supply and the related infrastructure:** ensuring the stable supply of clean energy (e.g. natural gas and nuclear power); studying the overall demand and development potential of clean energy in the region; and establishing common design and construction standards for clean energy infrastructure and facilities in the region.

Cooperation on Culture and Livelihood Issues

10. Having regard to the specific needs of people living across boundaries, it is proposed that the three sides should take forward closer cooperation in cross-boundary cultural exchanges, education, social welfare and food safety issues. Key cooperation proposals include-

- (a) **cross-boundary cultural exchanges:** transforming Hong Kong into an international cultural metropolis, strengthening the protection of intellectual property; enhancing exchanges and cooperation among the cultural departments of the three sides; and promoting cultural exchanges in the region;

- (b) **cross-boundary cooperation in education:** strengthening the transport support services for cross-border students; further enhancing the development of classes for Hong Kong and Macao children studying in Shenzhen; and facilitating mutual cooperation among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao in the provision of facilities, venues and other resources for organizing education and youth activities;
- (c) **cross-boundary cooperation in social welfare:** facilitating the social service providers of Hong Kong and Macao to operate elderly homes and welfare institutions for persons with disabilities in PRD; and encouraging the three sides to carry out training and personnel exchanges in respect of social work and social services; and
- (d) **cooperation in food safety:** raising the overall standards of food safety in PRD region by making reference to the safety management arrangements adopted for food supply in Hong Kong and Macao; and enhancing the exchange and emergency response mechanism on food safety in the Greater PRD.

Coordinated Spatial Development

11. To promote a quality living environment, it is necessary to address the spatial planning issues in the region, including the urban sprawl and land use planning for industries in the PRD, as well as the limited housing and development land areas available in Hong Kong and Macao. Spatial and town planning in the region should focus on transforming the spatial development practices in PRD and promoting coordinated cross-boundary developments in the region. Key cooperation proposals include-

- (a) continuing the planning and development of the priority cross-boundary cooperation areas: such as the Lok Ma Chau Loop Area, Qianhai in Shenzhen, Nansha New district in Guangzhou, etc.;

- (b) conducting joint study on coordinated spatial development in corridors along cross-boundary express railways; and
- (c) exploring the progressive expansion in the scope and coverage of cross-boundary spatial cooperation with due regard to the respective systems of the three sides.

Facilitating Development of Green Transportation and Convenient Boundary Crossing

12. To address the need for the development of convenient, green and people-oriented transportation services and to meet the objectives of quality living, it is proposed that the three sides should facilitate the development of green transportation and convenient boundary-crossing in the Greater PRD region. Key cooperation proposals include-

- (a) **enhancing transportation systems of the region:** promoting railway as the backbone of transportation systems in the Greater PRD region; strengthening marine and river transport developments; and facilitating development of non-motorized transport, where appropriate;
- (b) **promoting energy efficiency and emissions reduction in transportation systems:** raising fuel and emission standards; formulating measures for the control of pollution from vessels to protect coastal environment; and reducing emissions from motor vehicles;
- (c) **promoting sustainable development of transportation systems:** Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao to strengthen collaboration in the planning and development of transportation systems, including the design and layouts of transport infrastructure; and
- (d) **facilitating cross-boundary movement:** exploring the progressive relaxation of boundary-crossing restrictions; examining the feasibility of a simplified boundary crossing clearance process; and extending the operating hours of boundary control points progressively, taking into account the capacities of

boundary crossing and transport facilities.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

13. The three-month public consultation will end on 30 November 2011. The consultation document and its summary are available at the offices of the Environmental Protection Department, Environmental Resource Centers, and Public Enquiry Service Centers of the Home Affairs Department. They can also be downloaded from the dedicated study website (www.gprd-qla.com). The Government will also organise forums for experts, academics as well as the general public to collect their views.

ADVICE SOUGHT

14. Members are invited to advise on the initial proposals set out in the consultation document, in particular those on improving the environmental and ecological quality and promoting low-carbon development.

Environment Bureau
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