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Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2021

PURPOSE

In December 2016, the Government launched the first city-level Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) for Hong Kong (**Annex**). This paper briefs Members on the key components of the BSAP, and the role that the Nature Conservation Sub-committee (NCSC) of Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) could play in the implementation of BSAP.

BACKGROUND

2. The “Convention on Biological Diversity” (CBD) is an international treaty aiming to conserve biodiversity, utilise its components sustainably and ensure fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of biodiversity. The People’s Republic of China has been a Contracting Party to the CBD since 1993 and the CBD was extended to Hong Kong in 2011. In the 2015 and 2016 Policy Addresses, the Government committed to the formulation of a city-level BSAP for Hong Kong, with a view to stepping up conservation efforts and supporting sustainable development. Hong Kong’s BSAP aims at contributing to the achievement of global efforts and China’s national BSAP having regard to the conditions and capabilities of Hong Kong.

3. To formulate the BSAP, the Government had initiated various stakeholder engagements¹ starting from 2013. A public consultation exercise was conducted

¹ The three-tier advisory committee consisted of a steering committee, three working groups and 12 ad-hoc focus groups. The committee includes biodiversity experts and academics, as well as representatives from NGOs, professional bodies, universities, rural communities, private and public sectors, and relevant Government bureaux and departments.

from 8 January to 7 April 2016. The ACE was consulted on the BSAP Consultation Document on 14 March 2016. During the consultation, a total of 2 444 written submissions were received, including over 2 200 template-based submissions. The majority of the views received concurred that the rich biodiversity in Hong Kong should be treasured. There was wide-spread support for implementing the BSAP for pursuing sustainable development and striking a balance between development and biodiversity conservation. The proposed vision and mission statements and four key action areas were generally supported. The views collected are summarised in the public consultation report which has been published online².

THE CITY-LEVEL BSAP FOR HONG KONG

4. The BSAP was launched on 21 December 2016, outlining the strategy and actions to be taken in the next five years for conserving local biodiversity and supporting sustainable development. The BSAP document has been uploaded to the website of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)³.

5. The vision and mission of this BSAP set out Hong Kong's aspiration and commitment in conserving local biodiversity and supporting sustainable development, taking into account social and economic aspects, and are given below:

“Vision –

The rich biodiversity of Hong Kong is valued, conserved, restored, sustainably managed and wisely used, thereby maintaining essential ecosystem services and sustaining a healthy and liveable place to the benefits of all people.

Mission –

Our mission is to value, conserve and restore the rich biodiversity of Hong Kong, to ensure that it is sustainably managed and wisely used, and to promote the mainstreaming of biodiversity issues and values across all sectors of the society, with social and economic aspects duly considered and balanced, so that the ecosystems of Hong Kong will be resilient and will continue to provide essential services, and the precious environment that supports and enriches the life of Hong Kong people will be passed on to the future generations.”

² The public consultation report is available for download at the BSAP webpage: http://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/conservation/Con_hkbsap/bsap_background/files/BSAP_consultation_report_eng_161123.pdf

³ The BSAP document can be downloaded at <http://www.afcd.gov.hk/bsap>.

6. As it is the first BSAP for Hong Kong, the main focus of the BSAP is on mainstreaming biodiversity and cultivating greater public support and understanding. The BSAP provides a specific and practical plan of actions, comprising 23 action categories comprising 67 specific action items, under the following four areas.

Area 1 – Enhancing conservation measures

7. The Government will maintain and enhance existing protected areas and consider the potential to extend the protection where practicable to cover other ecologically important sites. In particular, we will take forward the proposed designation of the Soko Islands Marine Park, Southwest Lantau Marine Park and Robin’s Nest Country Park as protected areas, in addition to the designation of The Brothers Marine Park in December 2016. A 37-hectare nature park will also be set up at Long Valley to mitigate the ecological impacts arising from the development of the Kwu Tung North and Fanling North New Development Areas, and to support nature conservation and agriculture in this ecologically important area.

8. The Government is committed to the protection of endangered species and will step up enforcement against wildlife crime. Local trade in elephant ivory will be phased out and heavier penalties on smuggling and illegal trading of endangered species will be imposed. The enabling legislative amendments to the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) will be proposed shortly. To further strengthen the inter-departmental collaboration on combating wildlife crime, a “Wildlife Crime Task Force” which comprises representatives from the AFCD, Environmental Protection Department (EPD), Customs and Excise Department and Hong Kong Police Force has been set up.

Area 2 – Mainstreaming biodiversity

9. To “mainstream biodiversity” is to include biodiversity conservation as one of the considerations in all relevant policies, plans, projects and programmes of both the public and private sectors. It is widely recognised as a key factor for the successful implementation of the BSAP.

10. Better and more coordinated integration of biodiversity considerations in planning and development will provide greater clarity to the planning processes, hence facilitating sustainable development. The Government will continue to integrate biodiversity considerations into the territorial planning framework proposed under the “Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030” study, with a view to providing clear directions for long-term sustainable growth. The Government will update the chapter relevant to biodiversity

conservation in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, to better assist relevant Government bureaux and departments, as well as stakeholders in the development sector, to incorporate biodiversity considerations into their plans and projects. In addition, the Government will update the sustainability assessment system to improve biodiversity considerations when formulating major policies and plans.

11. Promoting biodiversity in urban environment can improve the liveability of urban space and bring in social and economic benefits. The Government will promote the concepts of urban forestry and place ecology⁴ to provide the driving force for implementing actions in the planning and design stages of works projects. It will be achieved through a series of measures, including, formulating an urban forestry strategy; promoting diversification of soft landscapes; optimising the use of native species; revitalising water bodies and promoting knowledge building and sharing on relevant landscape concepts, designs and technologies. Efforts will also be made to mainstream biodiversity into the fisheries, agricultural and business sectors.

Area 3 – Improving our knowledge

12. Improvement of knowledge in many ways helps effective policy implementation. The process of attaining knowledge will tap expertise outside the Government, enhance dialogue among stakeholders, and facilitate better understanding of issues and agreeing on common grounds. Improvement of knowledge helps the Government make better decisions and communicate more effectively with stakeholders, which will minimise disputes. In other words, investment in monitoring, research and information sharing will contribute to achieving biodiversity and sustainable development goals. Actions under this area include the establishment of a publicly-accessible biodiversity information hub that facilitates information sharing among stakeholders. The Government will work with experts to assess the status of various species based on established criteria and best available data, and compile a list of threatened species for Hong Kong to guide conservation actions. Relevant funding support for research will also be mobilised for filling important knowledge gaps identified.

⁴ Place Ecology is currently defined as the relations and interactions between places through a holistic integration of social, technological, environmental, economics and design of external landscapes that contribute to the overall place identity and sustainability of our urban environment.

Area 4 – promoting community involvement

13. Raising public awareness and understanding is an important area of focus in this BSAP, as this long-term and collaborative process will lead to greater community involvement in biodiversity conservation. Building on the momentum of the public engagement exercise launched for BSAP and that by the Council for Sustainable Development on sustainable consumption of biological resources, the Government will continue to organise annual biodiversity festivals as a platform for engaging NGOs to raise awareness and promote community involvement on biodiversity conservation. With a view to engaging the younger generation, the Government will continuously incorporate the concept of biodiversity into the school curriculum at appropriate levels, and engage NGOs to provide capacity-building for teachers, with a focus on facilitating experiential learning, guided field trips and outdoor volunteer work.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

14. The Government has earmarked \$150 million for taking forward the relevant initiatives under the BSAP from 2016/17 to 2018/19. The Environment and Conservation Fund has also earmarked additional funding for biodiversity education and community involvement project, as well as relevant research and studies. While the Environment Bureau (ENB) and the AFCDC will serve as the management unit, specific actions in the BSAP will also be implemented by other Government bureaux and departments and relevant sectors. A working group (WG) comprising relevant Government bureaux and departments, and chaired by the Secretary for the Environment, has been established to coordinate the implementation of the BSAP.

15. In addition, the Government will seek advice from the NCSC of the ACE on matters related to the implementation of the BSAP. Recommendations of the NCSC will be reported to the WG for consideration. The BSAP will be monitored and reviewed regularly, such that its implementation will be adaptively managed, the responsible parties and resources involved will deliver desired results, and its deliverables will be aligned with the overall vision, mission and strategy.

Environment Bureau

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

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