FAQ on Contaminated Land Management

Q. What is contaminated land?

A. Contaminated land mainly refers to land which has been polluted by hazardous substances as a result of anthropogenic activities (eg. industrial or commercial operations) carried out on and around the site over the years. In the local context, sites previously used by some trades may contain contaminated soils, such as those used for boat/ship building or repairing, chemical manufacturing/processing, concrete and asphalt production, motor vehicle repair, petrol filling stations, oil storage installations, metal scrap yards etc.

Q. What is the current legislative mechanism for addressing contaminated land issues in Hong Kong?

A. Land contamination is subject to control under the following legislation in the scenario as specified -

Building (Oil Storage Installations) Regulations – Contaminated land assessment and remediation is required in demolition of oil installations under the Regulations;

Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance **(EIAO)** – Contaminated land assessment and remediation is required for Designated Project under the EIAO;

Waste Disposal Ordinance **(WDO)** – The WDO sets out the framework for the management and prevention of waste. It is an offence for improper waste disposal which leads to land contamination;

Water Pollution Control Ordinance **(WPCO)** – The WPCO provides that the discharger may be liable to prosecution unless his discharge of waste or polluting matter into the inland waters (e.g. groundwater) or water bodies is made in accordance with the terms of the WPCO.

Q. What are the local standards for contaminated land?

A. The Risk-based Remediation Goals (RBRGs) are the local contaminated land standards. The RBRGs were promulgated for use since 2007 for four types of land uses in Hong Kong, namely, urban residential, rural residential,

industrial and public parks, to protect the local human receptors. The RBRGs were developed using a risk-based approach which means that decisions on contaminated soil and groundwater remediation will be based on the nature and extent of the potential risks that are posed to human receptors as a result of exposure to chemicals in the soil and/or groundwater. RBRGs have been developed as threshold contaminant concentrations, below which hazards or risks to human health arising from exposure to soil and/or groundwater are considered minimal.

Q. What are the reference documents on contaminated land management practices in Hong Kong?

A. The following three documents set out the key requirement and procedure for dealing with land decontamination issues in Hong Kong:

a) **"Guidance Note for Contaminated Land Assessment and Remediation" (GN):**
This GN sets out the requirements for assessment and management of contaminated sites, including the procedures to follow in conducting site assessment and remediation;

b) **"Guidance Manual for Use of Risk-based Remediation Goals for Contaminated Land Management" (GM)**:
This GM introduces the background of the RBRGs and provides detailed instructions for comparison of soil and groundwater data to the RBRGs; and

c) **"Practice Guide for Investigation and Remediation of Contaminated Land" (PG):**
The PG provides further guidance for conducting land contamination assessment and remediation in Hong Kong. The PG supersedes a similar document, namely, "**Guidance Notes for Investigation and Remediation of Contaminated Sites of Petrol Filling Stations, Boatyards and Car Repair/Dismantling Workshops**" which has been used since 1999, and provides more comprehensive coverage of potentially contaminated sites, chemical of concerns typically encountered in Hong Kong, and suitable remediation methods for application in Hong Kong.