

**Confirmed Minutes of the 246th Meeting
of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE)
on 10 May 2021 at 2:30 pm**

Present:

Mr Stanley WONG, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Prof Nora TAM, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Ms Sylvia CHAN, MH
Ms Ada FUNG, BBS
Ir Samantha KONG
Ms LAM Chung-yan
Ms Julia LAU
Prof Kenneth LEUNG, JP
Dr MA Kwan-ki
Dr Jeanne NG
Dr SUNG Yik-hei
Ms Christina TANG
Mr Simon WONG, JP
Dr WONG Kwok-yan
Prof WONG Sze-chun, BBS, JP
Dr Raymond YAU
Mr Owin FUNG, JP (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Ms Carmen CHAN, BBS, JP
Prof LAU Chi-pang, BBS, JP
Prof Alexis LAU, JP
Dr Winnie LAW
Mr Andrew LEE

In Attendance:

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| Ms Fanny HUI | Chief Information Officer, Environmental Protection Department (EPD) |
| Mr Simon CHAN | Assistant Director (Conservation), Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) |
| Ms Maggie CHIN | Assistant Director of Planning / Technical Services (Acting), Planning Department (PlanD) |
| Ms Becky LAM | Chief Executive Officer (CBD), EPD |

Miss Sally SHEK Executive Officer (CBD) 1, EPD
Miss Ingrid SUEN Executive Officer (CBD) 2, EPD

In Attendance for Item 3:

Ms Bella MUI Assistant Director (Nature Conservation), EPD
Mr Simon CHAN Assistant Director (Conservation), AFCD
Dr Flora MOK Senior Conservation Officer (Biodiversity), AFCD
Ms Michelle LUK Conservation Officer (Special Duties) 2, AFCD
Dr Evelyne KUO Conservation Officer (Biodiversity) 1, AFCD

Action

The Chairman welcomed Members attending the meeting in person or by Zoom and informed that apologies of absence had been received from Ms Carmen Chan, Prof Lau Chi-pang, Prof Alexis Lau, Dr Winnie Law and Mr Andrew Lee.

Item 1: Confirmation of the draft minutes of the 245th meeting held on 12 April 2021 (Closed-door session)

2. The draft minutes were confirmed without amendments.

Item 2 : Matters arising (Closed-door session)

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

**Item 3 : Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2021-
Progress of Implementation**
(ACE Papers 9/2021 and 10/2021)

4. The Chairman informed that *ACE Paper 9/2021* briefed Members on the updates of the annual progress of implementation of the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) 2016-2021. A background note on the subject matter (*ACE Paper 10/2021*), prepared by the secretariat had been circulated to Members for reference before the meeting.

5. There was no declaration of interest by Members.

(The presentation team joined the meeting at this juncture.)

Presentation cum Question-and-Answer Session (Open session)

6. Mr Simon Chan made opening remarks and Dr Flora Mok, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, briefed Members on the details of the major achievements and progress under the four key action areas of BSAP.

Measuring Effectiveness

7. Two Members suggested that AFCD should consider providing parameters to evaluate and illustrate the effectiveness of the current BSAP on biodiversity and nature conservation. The Member further enquired about actions taken to control improper behaviour such as camping outside the designated areas in country parks. Another Member enquired about the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of education on raising the awareness on biodiversity as well as community involvement.

8. Mr Simon Chan advised that deliverables had been set for each of the specific actions for monitoring the implementation progress. He shared that about one third of the specific actions set out in the BSAP had been completed and about one third of the specific actions were on-going. He advised that it would be difficult to establish parameters for an objective assessment of the effectiveness of BSAP implementation as some of the actions were difficult to be quantified. Having said that, he said that AFCD would consider presenting the progress in a manner that would facilitate public consumption. He also agreed to share with Members the figures on relevant enforcement actions in country parks after the meeting.

(Post-meeting notes: With regard to enforcement figures, the AFCD instituted 833 prosecutions in 2020 under the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations (Cap. 208A), which mainly involved littering, unauthorised possession or driving of bicycles or vehicles, damage of plants, lighting of fire, camping outside the designated areas, etc. The above information was passed to Members for reference on 24 May 2021.)

Enhancing Conservation Measures

9. A Member sought for the review result of the Monitoring and Management Plan of Sites of Special Scientific Interest which was completed in 2020. Dr Flora

Mok advised that the said review result contained sensitive information such as those about patrol and enforcement and thus was not suitable for publishing. Mr Simon Chan informed Members that useful information on biodiversity would be shared through a web-based information hub which was under preparation.

10. Two Members enquired about AFCD's plan to draw up conservation action plans for more species, and include more species in the compilation of the list of threatened species. To prepare for drawing up the list of threatened species, Dr Flora Mok explained that AFCD was currently coordinating species assessments among about 100 experts. AFCD had provided trainings for conducting assessments, as alignment of assessment standards and formulation of guidelines to facilitate assessment were required to ensure consistency among all taxonomic groups. AFCD planned to take a step-by-step approach for drafting the conservation action plans for different groups of species, which would be subject to the compilation result of the list of threatened species.

11. A Member observed that tree stocks from Mainland instead of local source were often used in Hong Kong which might cause gene pollution to the local native tree species and enquired about the Government's plan to optimise the use of local tree stocks. Another Member added that the Government should provide funding support for the local nursery to supply local tree stocks in Hong Kong considering the price advantage of tree stocks from Mainland. Dr Flora Mok explained that while measures had been taken to promote the use of native species in Government projects and the community, the choice of tree stocks in different projects might be subject to various considerations of the project proponents and specific needs of the projects.

Stakeholder Engagement

12. To keep stakeholders informed and facilitate their participation in the implementation of BSAP, a Member suggested that AFCD should publish the progress and relevant information on the website, such as progress on species assessment and names of organisations engaged in studies or projects, throughout the implementation of BSAP. Mr Simon Chan responded that AFCD had shared the reports and progress related to the BSAP on AFCD's website. He informed Members that a web-based information hub to provide a one-stop information platform on local biodiversity was under preparation. Useful information on biodiversity would be published through this information hub after its launch.

13. A Member suggested that AFCD should organise a sharing session for stakeholders to facilitate the exchange of views regarding the implementation of BSAP. Given the vast amount of information under each specific action, another Member suggested that AFCD should organise different sharing sessions with focus on the implementation of specific actions under BSAP, which would facilitate more in-depth discussion and gather valuable advice from the stakeholders. Mr Simon Chan responded that AFCD had worked closely with the stakeholders and experts throughout the implementation of BSAP and would engage them where necessary.

Education and Promotion

14. A Member commended the implementation of BSAP in Hong Kong as compared with neighbouring countries. However, he considered that there was a lack of public awareness and understanding about biodiversity and the measures taken by the Government. The Chairman suggested AFCD leverage on the effectiveness of online media or social platforms in promoting biodiversity. Another Member suggested that the Government should provide guided tours or information services at visitor centres of country parks with a view to enhancing public education. Considering the complexity of biodiversity issues, a Member suggested engaging advertising agencies to promote fruitful stories of BSAP in a simple and interesting manner to the public. Another Member suggested that AFCD should solicit the support of the public in the research work on biodiversity through education and publicity. To combat wildlife trading, the Member suggested that the Government should strengthen promotion and education to deter the buyers from seeking relevant products. Mr Simon Chan responded that AFCD would continue to spare no effort in promoting such messages.

15. To strengthen environmental education in schools, a Member suggested setting up a working group/committee under the Curriculum Development Council and the Curriculum Development Institute of Education Bureau to review and strengthen policies on environmental education. He suggested including biodiversity as part of the mandatory training for teachers so as to equip them with the necessary knowledge to carry out biodiversity education. He added that the Government should devise a comprehensive blueprint on strengthening environmental education in Hong Kong. Mr Simon Chan thanked the Member for his valuable suggestions and the Government would take them into consideration.

16. With reference to the findings in the *Baseline Survey on the Attitude and Level of Knowledge of the General Public and Stakeholder Groups towards Biodiversity in Hong Kong*, a Member suggested that the Government should encourage more extra-curricular outdoor activities in schools with a view to arousing the interest and awareness on nature conservation. Considering that outdoor activities might be affected under the COVID-19 epidemic, another Member enquired about the alternative options for education on nature conservation. Mr Simon Chan responded that funding support under the Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) was available for schools and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to organise activities and projects related to biodiversity. He advised that AFCD would continue to devise and implement appropriate measures, such as guided tours in the country parks, to promote biodiversity and nature conservation as appropriate.

17. To understand the effectiveness of biodiversity education, a Member suggested that the Government should provide funding and resources to undertake research on the awareness of students on biodiversity. Mr Simon Chan advised that funding support was provided under ECF to enhance environmental education and community action projects. He added that the Subventions for Biodiversity Education under the BSAP also provided funding to institutes and NGOs to conduct a wide diversity of education programmes to promote biodiversity.

18. As regards mainstreaming biodiversity, a Member enquired about actions taken within the Government and with external parties. Mr Simon Chan responded that the Government had given priority to mainstreaming through incorporating considerations on biodiversity conservation in various projects of different bureaux/departments, such as integrating biodiversity considerations in the Sustainability Assessment System in collaboration with Environment Bureau and the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines with Planning Department, and revitalising the channels by Drainage Services Department. He added that the Government would continue to encourage different sectors in the society to integrate biodiversity considerations in their business with a view to achieving mainstreaming of biodiversity.

Way Forward

19. Three Members enquired about the work plan and timetable for the next

BSAP, in particular the review of the current BSAP. The Member further suggested AFCD devise biodiversity management plan for country parks in addition to the proposed Robin's Nest Country Park. To facilitate the planning of the next BSAP, another Member suggested that the Government should evaluate the lessons learnt in the implementation of BSAP in the past five years by reviewing the requirement on financial and human resources and prioritising and consolidating key areas of concern among the 67 specific actions. A Member suggested, with the support of two Members, engaging the stakeholders in the evaluation of the current BSAP and gauging their views in devising the next BSAP.

20. In response to Members' questions on the evaluation of BSAP and the plan for the next step, Mr Simon Chan advised that the Government would review the implementation outcome of the current BSAP, and take into account contemporary conditions, resource availability as well as the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be discussed in the United Nations Biodiversity Conference scheduled in October 2021. He assured that the long-term and ongoing initiatives under the current BSAP would continue after 2021.

21. Two Members were concerned about the funding support for the next five years with a view to sustaining biodiversity conservation. Mr Simon Chan responded that financial resources would be sought at appropriate time in accordance with the existing resources allocation mechanism within the Government.

Conclusion

22. The Chairman summarised that Members generally considered that it was important to provide parameters such as baseline information for comparison to measure and illustrate the effectiveness of the BSAP. Efforts on enhancing public awareness and community involvement in biodiversity should also be strengthened. He concluded the discussion and thanked the representatives of AFCD and EPD for their presentation and detailed explanations.

Internal Discussion Session (Closed-door session)

Education and Promotion

23. To avoid damages to the countryside caused by visitors under the

COVID-19 epidemic, a Member suggested engaging advertising agencies to deliver educational messages on biodiversity conservation to deter improper behaviours. Drawing reference from successful promotional videos, the Chairman suggested the Government leverage on the social media and collaborate with popular key opinion leaders as appropriate. Instead of promoting the complex concept of biodiversity, another Member suggested advocating simple messages to promote relationship between the nature and mankind and protecting the environment. She considered that promotional activities with single and direct theme would be more effective in promoting environmental protection.

24. Mr Simon Chan advised that the Government had engaged advertising agencies to promote biodiversity and nature conservation, such as the “Mr. B Nature Classroom” Facebook page which was well received by the younger generation. The Government would continue to promote green hiking etiquette through different channels. He added that AFCD would consider different approaches in presenting the implementation progress and outcome of BSAP in a simple and interesting manner.

25. With more visitors in the country parks under the COVID-19 epidemic, the Chairman suggested strengthening the on-site public education provided by the visitor centres to promote nature conservation and biodiversity. A Member added that a dedicated hotline for reporting improper behaviours such as camping outside the designated area at country parks could be useful. Another Member further suggested improving the amenity facilities in country parks to improve the overall hygiene conditions. Mr Simon Chan informed that guided tours were currently available in country parks. He added that \$500 million had been earmarked for carrying out enhancement works in country parks in the coming years.

26. A Member considered that learning through experiences such as extra-curricular outdoor activities might be more effective than classroom learning. Drawing reference from her experiences in school education, another Member agreed that interactive education was effective in arousing the interest and awareness of children on nature conservation. She highlighted the importance of providing necessary training to equip teachers with the knowledge on the subject. Mr Simon Chan responded that AFCD would consider appropriate measures that might facilitate environmental education.

27. Pointing out that there was rich biodiversity in urban districts of Hong

Kong, a Member suggested the Government promote biodiversity in urban districts through providing proper guides or information. Mr Simon Chan advised that the Government had provided subvention for NGOs to organise citizen science projects and guided tours to facilitate the public to appreciate urban biodiversity.

Enhancing Conservation Measures

28. In response to a Member's enquiry on the action plans and progress regarding corals conservation, Mr Simon Chan advised that AFCD had been coordinating an annual survey of corals in Hong Kong in order to gather useful data on coral reef status. AFCD had put in place measures, such as conducting consultancy study on coral bleaching and bioerosion in Hong Kong, with a view to conserving the coral communities in Hong Kong. He remarked that the coverage of corals in Hong Kong had been healthy and stable in the recent years.

29. A Member suggested increasing the coverage of the corals in Hong Kong through growing new or artificial corals with a view to improving water quality and enhancing biodiversity. Dr Flora Mok advised that AFCD had been collaborating with local university in a coral restoration project to place 3D-printed artificial reef tiles underwater which served as a foundation for coral attachment, and the Department would continue to take appropriate measures for coral conservation.

30. The Chairman concluded the discussion and invited AFCD and EPD to consider taking on board the views and suggestions made by Members during the discussion.

(The presentation team left the meeting at this juncture.)

Item 4 : Report of the 148th Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee Meeting held on 19 April 2021 (Closed-door session)

(ACE Paper 11/2021)

31. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Chairperson of the Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee (EIASC), reported that *ACE Paper 11/2021* had summarised the discussion and recommendations of the EIASC meeting held on 19 April 2021 in respect of the EIA report on “Drainage Improvement Works Near Four Villages in Yuen Long – Sung Shan New Village, Tai Wo, Lin Fa Tei and Ha Che”.

32. Having regard to the findings of the EIA report and the information provided by the project proponent at the meeting, the EIASC recommended the full Council to endorse the EIA report on “Drainage Improvement Works Near Four Villages in Yuen Long – Sung Shan New Village, Tai Wo, Lin Fa Tei and Ha Che” with three conditions and three recommendations. With no further comments from Members, the Chairman concluded that the meeting agreed to recommend the Director of Environmental Protection (DEP) to endorse the EIA report with the conditions and recommendations as set out in paragraph 9 of the *ACE Paper 11/2021*.

Item 5 : Any other business (Closed-door session)

EIA Reports not selected by EIASC for submission to ACE

33. The Chairperson of the EIASC reported that since the last Council meeting, EIASC received the Executive Summary of the EIA report on “Sai O Trunk Sewer Sewage Pumping Station” which the Subcommittee had not selected for discussion. The Executive Summary of the EIA report had been circulated to EIASC Members upon commencement of the public inspection period, with the relevant hyperlinks copied to non-EIASC Members for information. Individual Members were advised to provide their comments, if any, on the EIA report directly to the DEP within the respective public inspection period. Given that the EIA report had not been selected by EIASC for presentation and discussion, the Chairperson concluded that EPD would take that ACE had no comments on the EIA report under section 8(3)(b) of the EIAO.

Item 6 : Date of next meeting (Closed-door session)

34. The next meeting was scheduled for 7 June 2021 (Monday). Members would be advised of the agenda in due course.

ACE Secretariat
June 2021