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ACE Paper 11/2006
For discussion

Advisory Council on the Environment
Study Visit to the Netherlands and Germany
Recommendations on the Management of Municipal Solid Waste

Introduction

A delegation of the Advisory Council on the Environment paid a visit to the Netherlands and Germany from 19 to 26 March 2006. The objective of the visit was to acquire more information and understanding of overseas experience and technologies on municipal solid waste (MSW) management and treatment. Apart from visiting the waste treatment plants and facilities, the delegation had an opportunity of exchanging views with high level officials of relevant Ministries in the Netherlands and Germany and representatives of the trade association. Details of the visit are contained in the report on the study visit in ACE Paper 10/2006.

2. The visit has given the delegation insights for the development of waste management strategies and treatment facilities in Hong Kong. The delegation would like to put forth recommendations on the way forward in the implementation of initiatives under the Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014) (Policy Framework).

Recommendations

3. The delegation has the following recommendations –

- (a) The waste management hierarchy (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Treatment and then Disposal) must be upheld and followed.
- (b) More resources should be committed for environmental education and capacity building. A dedicated 10 years plan (road map) on waste reduction education should be formulated to complement the Policy

Framework. Additional resources should be made available to fund waste reduction education programmes.

- (c) The current waste collection system should be reviewed to enhance waste sorting and recycling at source. Additional funding should be made available to set up a comprehensive and efficient waste separation and collection system.
- (d) Legislation on Product Responsibility Schemes and MSW charging should be introduced as soon as possible.
- (e) Landfilling of MSW is not sustainable and the first priority is to reduce the amount of waste we produce. To fasttrack the various policy and legislative measures on waste reduction and recycling contained in the Policy Framework, banning the disposal of "untreated" MSW to landfills should be introduced and implemented in tandem with the other initiatives such as Integrated Waste Management Facilities and landfill extensions within the timeframe of the Policy Framework (2005-2014).
- (f) Subject to meeting the waste reduction targets and adoption of the landfill ban, the extensions of existing landfills to provide the necessary disposal capacities are supported.
- (g) For the treatment of waste, mechanical sorting and recycling plants can be used for source-separated mixed recyclable waste. Based on the German experience, the Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) method for un-sorted and mixed MSW should not be used.
- (h) In Hong Kong, composting of MSW is only viable for source-separated food waste generated from commercial and institutional sources.
- (i) Thermal technology with waste to energy opportunity should be used as the core treatment technology for the unavoidable and non-recyclable waste. If funding allows, the chosen technology should achieve the lowest practicable gaseous and residual ash emissions.

Advice sought

4. Members are invited to comment on the recommendations.

ACE Secretariat
May 2006