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for information

Information Paper on
Hong Kong-Guangdong Environmental Protection Liaison Group

Background

The Hong Kong - Guangdong Environmental Protection Liaison Group (the 'EPLG') was established in October 1989 to improve co-operation between the governments of Hong Kong and Guangdong on environmental issues of mutual concern. A first annual meeting was held in 1990 in Hong Kong.

Terms of Reference

2. The Terms of Reference of the EPLG is as below:
 - a. To consult on air quality, water quality and other environmental objectives relating to areas of mutual concern.
 - b. To review existing and planned development projects that may give rise to adverse effects on environmental conditions in both Hong Kong and Guangdong, and consult on appropriate mitigating measures to reduce such effects.
 - c. To consult on contingency plans for dealing with pollution incidents which affect both sides.
 - d. To arrange exchanges of information on common pollutants, ecology, environmental quality, waste treatment and other matters involving environmental protection that are of mutual concern.
 - e. To review periodically the effectiveness of the Liaison Group in relation to both its administrative arrangements and the technical content of its programme, including the need for additional collaborative research programmes.

Composition and Working Arrangements

3. The EPLG is jointly chaired by the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands of Hong Kong and the Director of the Environmental Protection Bureau of Guangdong Province. Members from Hong Kong are the Director of Environmental Protection, the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries, and the Director of Planning. Members from Guangdong include: Deputy Head of the Guangdong Province Planning Commission, Deputy Head of the Guangdong Province Aquatic and Marine Products Bureau, Deputy Secretary of the Shenzhen Municipal Government, Head of the Shenzhen Environmental Protection Bureau, and Head of the South Sea Branch of the State Oceanic Administration. In addition, staff members from the departments listed above also participate in the meetings.

4. The EPLG holds annual meetings alternately hosted by Guangdong and Hong Kong. Ad hoc meetings may also be held if necessary. A Technical Sub-Group (TSG) was also set up under the EPLG to carry out tasks such as joint studies in the annual work programme agreed by the EPLG. Meetings of the TSG were held as and when necessary for the completion of assigned tasks. Findings or recommendations of the TSG would be reported to the EPLG for endorsement.

Progress of Work

5. The EPLG has held six annual meetings since its formation. At each meeting, the progress of the work programme for the past year would be reviewed. The TSG would submit its reports to the EPLG for endorsement. Each side would also give briefings on environmental issues of mutual concern. Then a work programme for the coming year would also be agreed.

6. Under the TSG, a Technical Report on the Deep Bay was completed. A two year joint monitoring of the Deep Bay then followed. This exercise monitored and analysed water, air and sediment samples obtained at various stations on both sides of Deep Bay and Shenzhen River. The final report of this exercise was endorsed by the EPLG at its meeting held in January 1996. A follow-up Deep Bay water quality modelling consultancy is being carried out at present. The EPLG also agreed to the scope of study for a similar joint study on Mirs Bay which would be undertaken by the TSG.

7. Briefings were also given at the EPLG meetings on topics such as: the Sewage Strategy Study, environmental protection work in Shenzhen, the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme, power station development in Hong Kong, the Territorial Development Strategy Review, marine parks and reserves, establishment of Mai Po as a Ramsar site, cross-border vehicle fuel control, the Air Pollution Index and Forecasting system.

8. The work programme for the current year agreed at the last EPLG meeting include these items: the TSG to proceed with the Mirs Bay environmental quality and development study; continuation of the Deep Bay water quality modelling and control strategy study; the exchange of information on high priority projects as well as exchange monitoring data on air and water quality; to conduct a workshop on power station pollution control in Hong Kong; to hold the seventh EPLG meeting in December in Hong Kong; to commence liaison and discussion on joint efforts to study the Chinese White Dolphins; and a visit programme.

Conclusion

9. The EPLG has proven to be a useful forum to discuss issues of concern to each side. It has also been useful as a channel to obtain and exchange information on environmental matters that were otherwise unavailable. Furthermore, the TSG also proved to be an effective vehicle to conduct joint studies to obtain baseline environmental information of use to both sides. Therefore, in recognition of this fact, both sides believed that it would be mutually beneficial to enhance future co-operation through this forum.

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