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Press Statement

April 28, 2002

The Proposed Merger of EFB and HWB a Misguided Reform

We, the undersigned environmental organizations, would like to express our grave concerns about the merging of Environment and Food Bureau with Health and Welfare Bureau into a new Environment, Health & Welfare Bureau under the ministerial reform as proposed by Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa on 17 April 2002. We opine that **the proposed merger is a misguided reform that will eventually undermine the importance of environmental and conservation issues in government's policy agenda.** We therefore urge the government to allow sufficient public consultation and to reconsider the proposal before implementing any restructuring in relation to the Environment and Food Bureau.

Our concerns and demands are elaborated as follows:

1. The merger is a backward step that overwhelms environmental and conservation issues with other policy issues placed under a bureau.

Given the wide range of areas that the new policy bureau will be responsible for, it is difficult to see how the new Principal Officer and the new Permanent Secretary can effectively handle enormous workloads from different policy issues like medical reform and social welfare reform while at the same time remain fully committed to environmental and conservation issues. The merging, therefore, will set an alarming trend in which environmental and conservation issues will subside gradually in government's policy agenda.

2. Instead, we suggest a relatively more independent Environment Bureau, dedicated to the environmental and conservation issues solely, to replace the existing Environment and Food Bureau.

The reform is against the global trend where an independent environmental administration with direct access to the top-level decision making processes is the norm. In the United States, for example, the Environmental Protection Agency reports directly to the president for all environmentally related issues. In Germany, there is a Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety to look after the

environment. A brief summary of environmental bureaux or ministries in foreign countries and their reporting structure is presented in **Appendix A**.

3. **We also encourage the government to provide an open consultation that allows adequate public debate and not to implement any reform in relation to the Environment and Food Bureau in a hasty manner.**

We are also very concerned about the way the government announced and implements the new reform proposal, especially about whether there will be sufficient room for public discussion. We are of the view that the proposed implementation date of 1 July 2002 is too soon for sufficient consultation, and the government should provide avenues for the public to express their views. We believe that if public opinion should have been well taken care of before the proposed reform, it could have positive impacts on the society and achieve its stated goals.

**Conservancy Association
Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong)
Green China Foundation
Hong Kong Bird Watching Society
World Wide Fund For Nature Hong Kong**

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Appendix A. A brief summary of {mission / responsibility} reporting lines/ structure and remit of administrative units responsible for environmental and conservation issues in various countries.

Country	Ministry /Department / Agency	Mission / responsibility	Organisation Structure
China	State Environmental Protection Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directly report to the State Council - Responsible for environmental policy formation and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State Council is composed of 19 ministries, 5 commissions and 1 Bank (the People's Bank of China) - State Environmental Protection Administration is not a ministry or commission but directly reports to the State Council
U.S.	Environmental Protection Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directly report to the president - It's mission is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment — air, water, and land — upon which life depends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Cabinet includes the Vice President and, by law, the heads of 14 executive departments. - Under President George W. Bush, Cabinet-level rank also has been accorded to 3 other agencies including the EPA.
	Fish & Wildlife Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission is to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reports to the Secretary of Interior who also oversees the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Land Reclamation, National Parks Service and Office of Surface Mining
U.K.	Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Under the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, there are two ministers, the Minister of State (Environment) and the Minister of State (Rural Affairs) - It's executive arm Department for Environment, Food, & Rural Affairs oversees environmental affairs and the regulation of the food industries in the UK, including animal welfare, safety standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Cabinet has 23 members, including the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
France	Minister of National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Ministry's mission is to monitor the quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Prime Minister's office has 15