



Statement on Product Eco-responsibility (Plastic Shopping Bags) Regulation

To : Subcommittee on Product Eco-responsibility (Plastic Shopping Bags) Regulation

Friends of the Earth (HK) recognizes and supports the legislative principle and objective of the Product Eco-responsibility (Plastic Shopping Bags) Regulation. FoE (HK) believes the proposed \$0.5 levy will serve as a reminder to customers on the impact of disposable culture, though the levy may not reflect the real environmental cost. Therefore, FoE (HK) will like to recommend the following for consideration:

Allow for voluntary participation by non-prescribed retailers

The plastic bag levy scheme applies to major chain supermarkets and convenience stores in the first phase. Many medium-sized and small retailers, like newspaper vendors and tenants of shopping malls in public housing estates, have reported to FoE (HK) of their willingness to join the scheme to reduce the cost of plastic bags. Thus, FoE(HK) reckons the need of encouraging and allowing individual retailers to apply for registration as a registered retailer for following reasons: 1) to include more retail shops; 2) to minimize the confusion arose from different fee-charging schemes like one as a compulsory government levy and one as a voluntary donation on no-bag days; 3) to lay the ground work for the second phase of plastic bag levy scheme.

Clear Display of Identity by Registered Retail Outlets

It is stated in the proposed regulation that registered retail outlets should display their registration certificates. FoE (HK) believes this is not enough to notify the public. FoE (HK) recommends the design of recognizable “plastic bag levy” logo for its display in posters, advertisements, web pages, shop entrances and cashier counters etc conspicuous public recognition. The names and addresses of registered retail outlets should be listed and updated regularly on the web page of Environmental Protection Department for public information.

Set Up a Report Hotline

FoE (HK) agrees with the penal mechanism laid out in the proposed regulation on offending retailers that hand out free plastic shopping bags. FoE (HK) proposes the administration to set up a report hotline for the public and the follow-up of the authority. The administration could also refer to the monthly publication of convictions for breaches of anti-pollution legislation by the Environmental Protection Department. Parallel listing of offending retailers for handing out free plastic shopping bags should serve as a deterrent.

Quarterly Publication of Statistics and Conduct Scheme Assessment within One Year

The administration should publish the levies received each quarter and the data of plastic bag use reduction to gain public support. FoE (HK) beholds that a thorough review of the scheme should be conducted one year into the implementation and a timetable on the implementation of second phase of the scheme should be made to prepare other retailers like pharmacies, bakeries, department stores and wet market tenants etc. Such will allow the public to understand the essence of cutting plastic bag use as a civil obligation.

Last, FoE (HK) strongly disagrees that the implementation of Product Eco-responsibility (Plastic Shopping Bags) Regulation should be postponed as a result of recent financial tsunami, as some advised. FoE (HK) asks the subcommittee members to seize the opportunity to promote the undertaking of environmental responsibility by the whole society and stall no further for the scheduled implementation of the first phase of plastic bag levy scheme by 1 July, 2009.

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Friends of the Earth (HK)

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