

**The views of the Association of Engineering Professionals in Society (AES) on the
“Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation
Environmental Protection and Ecology Conservation”**

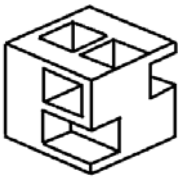
In response to the invitation of the Panel on Environmental Affairs, the Association of Engineering Professionals in Society Ltd (AES) is pleased to give below its views and suggestions on the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation - Environmental Protection and Ecology Conservation for consideration and discussion at the Panel Meeting on 21 July 2010.

General

1. AES shares the community's aspiration for quality living area and green economy which is vital in our pursuit for sustainable development and plays an important role in maintaining the competitiveness of Hong Kong as an international business and financial centre. Given the quality of air, fresh water supply and marine water/resources in Hong Kong is significantly subject to regional influence, it is pleasing to see that a Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation covering ecology enhancement and environmental protection was signed in April 2010 as a result of the National Development and Reform Commission promulgated the “Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the Pearl River Delta (PRD)” as a national policy in January 2009.
2. AES welcomes the Environment Bureau's Paper outlining the key areas of co-operation on environmental protection and ecology conservation under the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation and considers the Paper is an initial but important step for the PRD as a whole to achieve quality living area and green economy.

Concerted Actions to Prevent and Tackle Air Pollution

3. That AES welcomes the statement that both Hong Kong and Guangdong are committed to achieving the emission reduction targets set for 2010.
4. Regarding the joint study on Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Management Plan (2011-2020) to reduce the level of air pollutant emissions beyond 2010, AES wishes to remind the need to take due consideration of the views collected from the public consultation on the *Review of Air Quality Objectives and Development of a Long Term Air Quality Strategy for Hong Kong – Feasibility Study (Final Report)* issued a year ago in July 2009. AES looks forward to the results of the joint study.
5. Actions to strengthening the cooperation in researches into relationship between ambient air quality and the formation of photochemical smog and hazy weather, and enhancement of the Pearl River Delta Regional Air Quality Monitoring Network will help making informed decisions on tackling air pollution problems. More information on the action plan including timeline will be helpful. Furthermore, credible quality assurance system should be in place for data collected from monitoring network to ensure authenticity.



Enhancing Cleaner Production in the Region

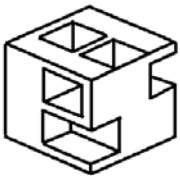
6. The 5-year Cleaner Production Partnership Programme launched by the Administration in April 2008 to facilitate Hong Kong owned enterprises in the PRD region to promoting energy efficiency and reducing emissions, followed by extension of its coverage to include effluent discharge treatment and reduction is commendable.
7. Given the resources allocated to the 5-year Programme could likely benefit around 2,000 Hong Kong owned enterprises out of the total estimate of 50,000 in the PRD region, it is suggested to monitor the effectiveness of the Programme if an interim report on the extent of energy savings and emissions/effluents reductions achieved after 3 years from launching and present the results in an Interim Report. This would help make an informed decision on way forward to further promote a wider application of cleaner production technologies among the industries.

Promoting Wider Use of Electric Vehicles

8. It is pleasing to learn that the Administration is working actively with the Shenzhen Municipal Government on trials of dual plug-in hybrid vehicles, and with Guangdong in the development of EV auto parts in the Greater PRD region in an effort to promote wider adoption of electric vehicles (EV). However, the Administration should consider encourage and offer necessary resources to support enterprises/industry operating in Hong Kong to develop expertise and capability in the design and production of EV core components and charging infrastructure. This would in turn create wider employment opportunities for local residents, relying less on services industries.
9. Given the price of EV is at this stage more expensive than conventional fossil fuel powered vehicles of same class, the Administration should consider the adoption of the following financial incentives for a limited period to promote wider use of EV in Hong Kong
 - Lower or exemption of first vehicle tax for new EV
 - Subsidy for changing more than 10 years old fossil fuel vehicles to EV
 - Lower or exemption of toll charges for using Government's Toll Tunnels/Roads
 - Free road side parking space

Cooperation in Protecting Marine Water Quality

10. It is noted that Shenzhen and Hong Kong commenced the first review of the Regional Water Quality Control Strategy for Mirs Bay in October 2008. AES looks forward to the results of review and recommendations to protect Mirs Bay and meet sustainable developments objectives schedule for completion in 2011.
11. The review on the effectiveness of the Deep Bay Water Pollution Control Joint Implementation Programme should commence not later than 2012, i.e. 5 years after the progress of pollution reduction which was last revised in 2007. AES wishes to point out that the water quality of Deep Bay is greatly influenced by the pollutants in the Pearl River. It is necessary that the quality of discharges in the Pearl River catchment should be taken into account in setting the water quality improvement targets in Deep Bay. Tentative date of completion of review should be given once available.



Promoting the Development of Circular Economy

12. With the introduction of Producer Responsibility Scheme for waste electrical and electronic equipment in Hong Kong, it is high time we should focus more on increasing the rates of recycling and reuse of other reusable materials produced in Hong Kong.
13. Notwithstanding Hong Kong has Eco-Product Responsibility Ordinance and Eco Park in place, AES supports to work closely with Guangdong to explore further the feasibility to promote development of circular economy in the PRD region.

Co-operation in Ecology and Marine Resources Conservation

14. AES supports the action plan outlined in the Environment Bureau's Paper on ecology and marine resources conservation. It would be helpful if a time line on the commencement and completion of the following:
 - Mangroves restoration at the Pearl River Estuary conservation project
 - Planning of major cross-boundary nature conservation areas
 - Feasibility study and consultation on the proposed designation of Robin's Nest in the border areas as a country park
 - Law enforcement actions in respect of marine fisheries, e.g. trawling operations in shallow waters.

Observations

15. The Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation – Environmental Protection and Ecological Conservation with a view to jointly building the Greater PRD region quality area has the full support of AES.
16. It is noted that great efforts have been and are being made to improve cross-boundary air quality through energy conservation, use of cleaner fuel and adoption of cleaner technologies. The wider use of renewable energy, such as wind and solar to supplement fossil fuel should also be promoted.
17. Apart from addressing air pollution, attention should be given to the impact of climate change which is now believed to be the root cause for increasing frequency and severity of extreme events such as droughts, floods, landslides, torrential rains, hurricanes, snow storms, melting glaciers and rising sea levels reported in various parts of the world over the past few years. Co-operation in building low carbon economy in the Greater PRD region to address climate change should be actively explored.
18. Given the world wide scarcity of fresh water supply and the quality of fresh water is so vital to the health of people and the sustainable development of Hong Kong, the Administration should work closely with the Guangdong Government to ensure adequacy and safety of water supply to Hong Kong at all times. The efforts being made by the Administration in promoting public awareness on effectiveness use and savings of precious fresh water is commendable.