

March 4, 2011

Legco Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene Panel

Dear Honourable Members of the Hong Kong Legislative Council,

We congratulate the government for initiating legislation to impose a trawling ban in Hong Kong waters. Fisheries scientists and ecologists around the world have proven that trawling is the primary destroyer of fish habitat, fisheries, and fishing communities. It has similarly destroyed Hong Kong's fishery resource and industry.

The AFCD's scientific investigations of the impact of the impact of trawling on Hong Kong's fisheries are sound and their conclusions inescapable. The AFCD's proposal has been supported by local and international fisheries experts. Moreover, the AFCD's discussions with stakeholders on the implications of a trawling ban were extensive and effective. Indeed there is a strong general awareness that imposing a trawling ban is the only way forward to revive the ecosystem and industry. We need to get over the short-term hurdles of job displacement and compensation, and redeploy our social, financial and human capital in a more efficient manner. Instead of wasting time on running down the fishery to collapse we need to redeploy employment and resources to rebuilding the fishery. This constructive approach will bring much greater benefits to the fishing community and Hong Kong society in general.

Rejuvenating the marine ecosystem will bring a diversity of paybacks for Hong Kong society—a sustainable source of seafood, a vital fishing community, more enjoyable recreational fishing and scuba diving, an improved tourism experience. Perhaps most importantly, Hong Kong will show leadership in creating a more sustainable world, and will rightly gain kudos for setting a benchmark.

We at HKUST feel these issues acutely. As a world-renowned scientific institution with a highly respected coastal marine laboratory, it causes us significant unease that trawling has reduced our immediate seascape to a marine desert. Many of our staff and students have been attracted to our campus because of its marine beauty. More importantly, we know that our local community—its residents, tourist industry and fishing culture—depend on this ecosystem. Research by our faculty in anthropology and sustainable development demonstrates this socio-economic relationship and our marine ecologists testify to the damage that has been done by trawling. We feel a responsibility to help the community rebuild the ecosystem, but the continued allowance of trawling prevents us from initiating substantive improvements.

The government's proposed ban on trawling offers an exciting opportunity to revitalize Hong Kong's fishery and marine ecosystem. HKUST strongly supports this

initiative and looks forward to contributing to what must be described as an excellent win-win opportunity.

Signed

Jerry Patchell,

Divisions of Social Science and Environment, HKUST

Chak Chan,

Division of Environment; Director Institute of Environment, HKUST

Paul Harrison,

former Associate Director Institute of Environment, HKUST