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22 February 2012

Clerk to Panel
(Attn: Ms Christina SHIU)
Legislative Council Secretariat
The Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Madam,

Panel on Development: The Government's strategy to enhance land supply through reclamation outside Victoria Harbour and rock cavern development

I refer to your letter dated 30 January 2012 inviting the views of the Hong Kong Institute of Environmental Impact Assessment (HKIEIA) on the captioned strategy, to be discussed at a meeting convened by the Panel on Development.

As Chairman for the HKIEIA, I write to provide a written submission as below in English. An electronic copy of this English submission will be sent separately to your email account. We shall not provide a Chinese version and shall not attend the meeting. The reply slip indicating the above is attached.

*****Submission*****

**Submission to the Legislative Council Panel on Development:
The Government's strategy to enhance land supply through Reclamation outside Victoria Harbour and rock cavern development**

The Hong Kong Institute of Environmental Impact Assessment (HKIEIA) was consulted at one of the open forums held on 29 November 2011. The HKIEIA would like to raise the following views, after taking into consideration the information made available publicly by the Administration on the subject.

Need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the strategy to justify options

1. The current study is to explore options of a strategy to enhance land supply. Given that the strategy will have major impacts on the environment, it must undergo a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)--to objectively assess the potential environmental impacts of all possible options--before coming up with the recommendations. The SEA findings on all options must be made available before public consultation. In the absence of such holistic and public SEA findings to substantiate, we have reservation over the Administration's claim that Hong Kong must rely on reclamations outside of Victoria Harbour and rock cavern development as the two main strategic options. The information provided by the Administration through presentation materials and answers to FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) on the web are not sufficient to justify that the reclamation option is indispensable. Given the lack of a clearly defined population policy to support well grounded projections into the future, the Administration's projected demand for 45,000 hectare of land reserve by 2039 remains dubious.

Material Reuse and Disposal to justify Reclamation

2. The reuse of surplus fill and the disposal of contaminated sediment are material management issues to be separately dealt with by a robust territory-wide wastes management strategy. Material reuse and disposal should not be the driver or the means to justify reclamation as an indispensable option to enhance land supply. However, we do recognize that there can be opportunities to build synergy between the two strategies—through proper planning and co-ordination of material handling and management procedures.

Cavern Development Option

3. In the absence of information that adequately considers other pertinent land supply options [Note 1] and when viewing the two options in isolation, rock cavern development is preferred to reclamation outside the Victoria Harbour, from the environmental protection perspective. This is particularly relevant if the cavern option serves primarily to free up at-grade land now occupied by polluting uses for other pressing beneficial use such as residential development.

4. The relocation of the Shatin Tin Sewage Treatment Works, the Mount Davis fresh water primary service reservoirs and the Kennedy Town fresh water service reservoir to new caverns developments are promising proposals and deserve further investigations to include the necessary environmental impact assessments. The potential size of land that may be released, by when, and the degree to which the reliance on reclamation to acquire land can be relieved should also be considered. The assessments should cover planned future uses suitable for the free up locations to ensure environmental compatibility.

Reclamation outside Victoria Harbour Option

5. Since the completion of the Hong Kong 2030 Study, there is insufficient evidence to justify that reclamation is now an indispensable option to supply land. The provision of land by reclamation is irreversible and will result in a permanent loss of Hong Kong’s natural shoreline. There is no over-riding reason why reclamation to supply land cannot remain as a last resort and to be exercised with care. Reclamation outside Victoria Harbour as a last resort can in fact be further studied as part of the land supply strategy. The Administration can be tasked to provide realistic projections on land demand and supply, and to devise the necessary program to achieve these targets. The program can then be monitored to ensure adequate lead time be factored in and proper co-ordination be exercised to maximize the reuse of surplus fill material.

6. Given the controversy over the need of reclamation as an option, it is considered premature to consider, without the proper context, the long list of proposed reclamation sites. However if it is essential to show a preference, “Group C: reclamation upon artificial or disturbed shoreline” would be the less damaging, especially for those sites that can be considered in synergy with some of the existing facilities identified as suitable to be relocated within cavern developments.

In summary, the Hong Kong Institute of Environmental Impact Assessment concludes the following:

- **The recommended options to enhance land supply strategy should be justified based on valid findings of a comprehensive Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to holistically address the environmental impacts of the full range of available options, amongst other factors. Such SEA findings should be made public before conducting the next consultation exercise.**
- **Material reuse and disposal should not be the driver to justify land supply through reclamation. Material handling and reuse should be addressed under the wastes management strategy.**
- **At present, there are insufficient information and analyses to justify the two recommended options: cavern development and reclamation outside of Victoria Harbour.**
- **Further studies, including detailed environmental impact assessments, are necessary to examine the feasibility of an option at a particular site. In the absence of pertinent information, it is misleading to request the public to indicate option or site preferences and priorities.**

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Note 1: When addressing public concerns raised on why land supply cannot rely on developing existing rural areas as derelict farm/agricultural land, opening up of the “Closed Area”, develop Kam Tim or Au Tau, rezoning and redevelop Industrial Land, redevelop old urban areas, the answers provided by the administration are piece meal, unclear and not conclusive. The information provided in totality cannot be considered as sufficient justifications to make reclamation an indispensable option. Other options: redevelopment, land rezoning and land resumption should not be ruled out as suitable land supply options

without adequate substantiation. The Administration is also silent on what have been done regarding efforts to explore market incentives to drive such options and what future actions can be taken as market drivers. There has been very limited effort spent to convince the public that Hong Kong must rely on reclamation and cavern development options for land supply.

*****END*****

We would be grateful for your necessary follow up actions.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Shirley LEE
Chairman,
Hong Kong Institute of Environmental Impact Assessment
(email: shirsllee422@gmail.com; fax: 2577 6282)

c.c. Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP (Chairman) via the LegCo Secretariat

b.c.c. All HKIEIA ExCo members (by e-mail)