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Clerk to Subcommittee on Refuse Collection and Resource Recovery
Panel on Environmental Affairs
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attention : Mr Joey Lo)

5 January 2017

Dear Mr Lo,

**Legislative Council
Panel on Environmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Refuse Collection and Resource Recycling**

**Views from the Environmental Campaign Committee
on Refuse Collection and Resource Recycling**

The Environmental Campaign Committee (ECC) was set up in 1990 to promote public awareness of environmental issues and encourage the public to contribute actively towards a better environment. Since its establishment, the ECC has planned and organised many environmental events and activities for different sectors of the community. It also advises the Government on publicity and educational programmes related to the environment with a view to contributing to the Government's formulation of relevant policy initiatives and measures.

In response to the invitation by the Panel on Environmental Affairs' Subcommittee on Refuse Collection and Resource Recovery for views on refuse collection and resource recovery in Hong Kong, we would like to submit the following comments and observations for the Subcommittee's consideration.

The ECC supports in general the idea of on-site treatment of municipal waste in the form of separation of different categories of recyclable materials. We recognise that the Government has undertaken a multi-pronged approach, as promulgated under the "Blueprint for Sustainable Use of Resources 2013-2022" published in May 2013, to drive behavioural change to reduce waste and promote recycling. Complementary to the Government's initiatives to maintain the provision

of waste separation and recycling support, we consider that it is of utmost importance to engage the community in **nurturing a new culture in which individuals take up the responsibility of waste separation** at home, at work or at public places. The Government needs to maximise the impact of its education and publicity campaigns to boost public participation in reduction, source separation and recycling of waste.

The success of engaging the public to practise separation of recyclables is **critically dependent on the public's confidence in the existence of a robust and efficient mechanism of proper treatment and recycling of the collected recyclables**. For instance, the public needs to be reassured that the recyclables collected will not be mixed with other refuse and disposed of at landfill in the end. It is therefore extremely important that Government establishes **visibly** at the outset an efficient system facilitating the collection of recyclable materials at the community level.

The waste recycling industry is inclined to avoid collecting contaminated recyclables, and does not prefer collecting mixed recyclables because money has to be spent to sort or pre-treat the recyclables, which jeopardises commercial viability. This reality on the ground must be addressed to enable practical recycling of waste at the industrial level. The Government's recent initiatives including promoting clean recycling and advocating on-site separation of recyclables are moving on the right track.

We observe that the local recycling industry has all along been regarded as a profit-making private business. However we understand that the local recycling industry faces great challenges in striving to survive owing to various factors such as the low value of their products and high operational costs including land rental. We advocate that **the Government should adopt a new perspective which sees the recycling industry as a provider of "out-sourced service" which effectively helps Government reduce the amount of waste which would otherwise take up valuable space in landfills**. While a Recycling Fund is already in place, the Government should seriously consider lending further support to the local recycling industry. For example a proportion of financial resources originally destined to the expansion of landfills and municipal waste collection may be deployed to support the sustainable development of the recycling industry and their recycling operations.

Finally, we firmly believe that the implementation of municipal solid waste charging would provide the necessary impetus to drive further waste reduction and recycling in the community.

Yours sincerely,



(Lam Chiu Ying)

Chairman, Environmental Campaign Committee