

(Translation)

**Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council  
Public Hearing on the Director of Audit's Report No. 75**

**Chapter 1: Collection and Removal of Marine Refuse by the Marine  
Department**

**Opening Remarks by the Secretary for the Environment**

Mr Chairman,

I would like to thank the Audit Commission for its comprehensive audit work and valuable comments with regard to the collection and removal of marine refuse by the Marine Department. We accept the various recommendations made by the Audit Commission in the Director of Audit's Report (the Audit Report). The Marine Department is actively following up on the implementation of the related measures. I will now briefly introduce the Government's policies on the collection and removal of marine refuse and the follow-up actions taken by the Marine Department in response to the recommendations made in the Audit Report.

**Government's policy on marine refuse collection and removal**

2. The Government has all along attached great importance to the marine refuse problem. To improve the cleanliness of our waters and shorelines, a three-pronged strategy has been adopted over the past few years. The strategy includes reducing waste generation at source; reducing the amount of refuse entering the marine environment; and removing refuse from the marine environment. In order to focus on the discussion and handling of the relevant work areas, and to strengthen the inter-departmental cooperation on tackling marine refuse and marine environmental incidents, in January 2018, the

Environment Bureau revamped the Inter-departmental Working Group on Clean Shorelines set up in November 2012 and renamed it as the Inter-departmental Working Group on Marine Environmental Management (the Working Group), with member departments including the Marine Department and the Environmental Protection Department which have sent representatives to attend today's hearing.

3. The Environment Bureau has all along been providing support at the policy level to the Marine Department. The Environment Bureau conducts regular meetings with the management of the Marine Department through the Working Group to learn about and monitor the progress of various work duties, with a view to ensuring their alignment with the relevant targets and policy directions. We will continue to maintain close contact with the Marine Department through the Working Group and daily work, and supervise the work of the Marine Department on the collection and removal of marine refuse.

### **Recommendations in the Audit Report**

4. I am going to briefly introduce the series of follow-up actions taken by the Marine Department in response to the Audit Report's recommendations.

5. The Audit Report pointed out that there were significant discrepancies between the quantities of marine refuse collected as reported in the Marine Department's Controlling Officer's Reports and the quantities of municipal solid waste disposed of by the contractor as per the records from landfills and refuse transfer stations. The "discrepancies" arose were due to the different measurement approaches adopted for the two sets of figures. The Marine Department's estimation was based on the quantities of marine refuse collected by the contractor, whereas the records from landfills and refuse transfer stations were based on the actual weight of refuse received. We understand that such practice may give rise to ambiguities and cause misunderstandings

by the public easily. We have already reviewed the relevant practice. In order to clarify the unit used for measuring the quantities of refuse collected, with effect from 1 January 2021, the Marine Department has adopted the volume unit of “cubic metre” for measuring the quantities of refuse collected at sea and from vessels. This practice is also in line with that adopted by the International Maritime Organisation, i.e. measuring the quantities of refuse in “cubic metre”.

6. The Audit Report pointed out that the Marine Department should clearly specify the arrangement for charges incurred in refuse disposal at refuse transfer stations for tender exercise in future. The Marine Department will specify clearly in future tender documents of the contract for the whole of Hong Kong waters that the contractor has to bear all the costs of marine refuse disposal. Besides, the Marine Department will take due consideration of the recommendations of the Central Tender Board when drafting tender documents in future, with a view to attracting more contractors to bid for contracts of marine refuse cleansing to enhance tender competition.

7. The Marine Department will continue to strengthen the monitoring work over the collection and removal of marine refuse by the contractor, and to ensure that the required frequency of daily cleanliness patrols for each patrol area is met. Upon receipt of reports on marine refuse, the Marine Department will notify the contractor to perform cleansing work in the relevant area, and will re-check the cleanliness at sea after the contractor has performed marine refuse cleansing work as directed. The Marine Department will also deploy patrol officers to conduct surprise checks on priority areas and marine refuse collection points to monitor the performance of the contractor.

8. Regarding new initiatives on marine refuse cleansing, the Marine Department has procured two sets of floating booms for trials of intercepting floating refuse at suitable waters which will not interfere with vessel navigation.

The Marine Department conducted trials in the Western District Public Cargo Working Area and Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter in mid-October 2020 and late November 2020 respectively. The results show that floating booms can effectively intercept floating refuse in calm and sheltered waters. In view of this, the Marine Department will start with the installation of floating booms in Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter to intercept floating refuse.

9. Apart from the above measures, the Environmental Protection Department and the Marine Department will step up publicity and collaborate with relevant organisations and groups and government departments in conducting joint cleansing operations to clean up marine refuse in the foreshore areas.

10. I am grateful to the Director of Audit and his colleagues for the value-for-money audit review. The Marine Department accepts the recommendations in the Audit Report. The Environment Bureau will continue to closely monitor the implementation progress of the various measures at policy level, so as to ensure that the recommendations are effectively implemented.

11. Mr Chairman, I hope this brief explanation can give Members a general picture of the work of the Marine Department on the collection and removal of marine refuse and the follow-up measures. As for details of the measures, the Director of Marine and her colleagues are happy to answer Members' questions later. Thank you.

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