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25 March 2021

Ms. Wendy JAN  
Clerk to the Public Accounts Committee,  
Legislative Council,  
Legislative Council Complex,  
1 Legislative Council Road,  
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms. JAN,

**Public Accounts Committee  
Consideration of Chapter 1 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 75  
Collection and Removal of Marine Refuse by the Marine Department**

I refer to your letter dated 9 March 2021 under ref: CB4/PAC/R75 concerning the above subject. Please find the requested information set out below.

Part 1: Introduction

**(a) The roles of the Environment Bureau (ENB), the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and the Marine Department (MD) in tackling marine refuse, and whether ENB has a monitoring role in MD's work on this front; if yes, how ENB performs its role to oversee the work of MD, such as ensuring the accuracy of statistics on the quantities of marine refuse collected as reported in MD's Controlling Officer's Reports;**

**Reply:** The Government has all along attached great importance to tackling 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. Regarding the handling of marine refuse, ENB plays the role as the policy bureau responsible for formulating policies

and providing policy steer. In order to focus the discussion and handling of the relevant work areas, and to strengthen the inter-departmental co-operation on tackling marine refuse and marine environmental incidents, in January 2018, ENB revamped the Inter-departmental Working Group on Clean Shorelines set up in November 2012 and renamed it as Inter-departmental Working Group on Marine Environmental Management (the Working Group), with member departments including MD and EPD. ENB has regular meetings with the management of the departments through the Working Group, so as to understand and monitor the progress of various work areas, thereby ensuring their compliance with the related targets and policy directions. EPD is responsible for supporting the implementation of the relevant policies of ENB, and performing tasks assigned by the Working Group, such as monitoring the cleanliness condition of coastal areas and beaches, as well as conducting public education and publicity on the message of clean shorelines. As for the routine marine cleansing work, including collecting and reporting the quantities of marine refuse, as well as ensuring the accuracy of the statistics, it is undertaken and monitored by MD.

## Part 2: Administration of marine refuse cleansing and disposal contracts

- (b) With reference to paragraph 2.4 of the Audit Report, please advise how the Administration could resolve the significant discrepancies between the quantities of municipal solid waste disposed of by the contractor as per EPD's records and the quantities of marine refuse collected as reported in MD's Controlling Officer's Reports, so as to reflect the Administration's work in tackling marine refuse as a whole in a consistent manner;**

**Reply:** On this issue, ENB notes that MD has explained the reasons and solution for the "discrepancies" in its reply to Question (a) (i) and (ii) from Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and, in its reply to Question (e), MD promises to review the relevant performance indicators in the Controlling Officer's Reports, including the consideration of including additional performance indicators so as to evaluate the relevant work more effectively. ENB agrees with MD's reply and has no further supplement.

**\*Note by Clerk, PAC:** See Appendix 9 of this Report for the reply from Director of Marine.

Part 4: Other related issues (c)

**(c) According to Table 10 in paragraph 4.7 of the Audit Report, the Marine Refuse Study commissioned by EPD and released in April 2015 revealed that shoreline and recreational activities and ocean/waterway activities represented about 89% of marine refuse in Hong Kong. Please advise whether EPD and MD have taken into account the above findings of the study in planning their enforcement operations, such as arranging officers to take enforcement actions in plain clothes, and enhanced public education and publicity campaigns to curb source activities of marine refuse;**

**Reply:** Making reference to the findings of the Marine Refuse Study, EPD has been taking the reduction of the amount of refuse entering the marine environment as one of the objectives of its work and achieving it by enhancing public education / promotion activities as well as coordinating other measures, and actively encouraging community groups and volunteers to participate in the clean shorelines work. Since 2015, EPD has coordinated the efforts of other government departments in supporting volunteer groups to organise up to 1 600 shoreline cleanup activities, while 78 “Shorelines Cleanup Day” activities have been organised by EPD with over 2 700 participants. Apart from the shoreline cleanup activities, EPD has also organised various types of public education and public engagement activities to promote the message of preventing marine pollution caused by refuse, including:

- organising competitions such as those on shoreline cleanup slogans, comics, video filming, publicity posters, etc.;
- organising roving exhibitions on clean shorelines in the 18 districts;
- producing TV Announcements in the Public Interest;
- holding public engagement sessions;
- subsidising clean shorelines projects through the Environment and Conservation Fund (43 projects have been approved since 2017, with a total subsidy of about \$22 million);
- setting up the Clean Shorelines Liaison Platform (including thematic website, Facebook page, Instagram and YouTube channel);
- organising the “World Environment Day and World Oceans Day 2019 – Plastic-free Fun Fair” cum “Clean Shorelines Heroes”

Award Presentation Ceremony;

- distributing flyers to restaurant/food stall owners; and
- implementing the Student Environmental Protection Ambassador Scheme — Marine Conservation, Cleaner and Greener Shorelines programme, and organising instructor training courses jointly with the Scout Association of Hong Kong.

In addition, EPD has coordinated the implementation of the following measures taken by members of the Inter-departmental Working Group on Clean Shorelines to prevent refuse from entering the sea:

- providing additional drinking water facilities at coastal activity sites, and imposing a ban on the sale of bottled drinking water through vending machines;
- installing floating booms at drainage outlets, and conducting trials of refuse interception technologies at river channels;
- providing additional litter bins and recycling bins at the public piers and landing steps, or moving them closer; and
- conducting joint enforcement operations at the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter and Aberdeen Fish Market, and formulating practice guides to avoid foam plastics from entering the sea.

As for the relevant work of MD, please refer to its reply to Question (bb) from PAC.

- (d) **With reference to paragraph 4.15 of the Audit Report, please advise the follow-up actions taken/to be taken by EPD and MD to ensure the accuracy and timely update of the information relating to marine refuse cleansing work provided on the "Clean Shorelines" Website;**

**Reply:** On this issue, ENB notes that MD has elaborated on its follow-up actions in its reply to Question (cc) from PAC. ENB agrees with MD's reply and has reminded EPD and MD to keep close liaison to ensure that the information relating to marine refuse cleansing work provided on the "Clean Shorelines" Website is accurate and up-to-date.

- (e) **It was mentioned in the public hearing that the cleanliness of beaches has improved since 2015. Please provide relevant statistics on beach cleanliness from 2010 to 2020.**

*\*Note by Clerk, PAC: See Appendix 9 of this Report for the reply from Director of Marine.*

**Reply:** In April 2015, EPD started to monitor the cleanliness condition of the priority sites. A five-level cleanliness grading system: “Grade 1 – Clean”; “Grade 2 – Satisfactory”; “Grade 3 – Fair”; “Grade 4 – Unsatisfactory” and “Grade 5 – Poor”, is also devised to gauge the cleaning efforts.

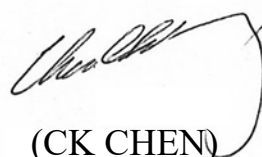
The cleanliness of the priority sites has improved significantly since 2015 (see Table 1 for the details). Currently, 97% of the priority sites have an average cleanliness grading ranging from “Grade 1 – Clean” to “Grade 3 – Fair” and none of them was found with a “Grade 5 – Poor” condition during regular inspections.

**Table 1 Average cleanliness gradings of priority sites from 2015 to 2020**

Year	Average cleanliness grading				Total
	1 to <2	2 to <3	3 to <4	4 to ≤5	
2015	17 (63%)		7 (26%)	3 (11%)	27
2016	23 (85%)		3 (11%)	1 (4%)	27
2017	23 (85%)		2 (7.5%)	2 (7.5%)	27
2018	27 (93%)		0	2 (7%)	29
2019	25 (86%)		4 (14%)	0	29
2020	28 (97%)		1 (3%)	0	29

Note: EPD conducted a review in 2017 to update the list of priority sites. The new list comprises 29 sites, among which 14 are newly added.

Yours sincerely,



(CK CHEN)

for Director of Environmental Protection

c.c.

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