

(Translation)

To: Hon Christine LOH
Chairman, LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs

From: Professor Hon NG Ching-fai and
Hon CHOY So-yuk

Date: 30 September 1998

As we will both be out of town next Monday, we regret to inform you that we will not be able to attend the Special Meeting of LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs to be held that day for discussion on the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme (SSDS).

SSDS is another Public Works Programme which involves an investment of up to tens of billions of dollars. Furthermore, it has very far-reaching implications for the ecological environment of the territory in the next century. We sincerely hope that our comments on the issue as described in the ensuing paragraphs will be conveyed at the meeting.

With the delay in the construction of submarine outfall in Stage I of SSDS due to sewage leakage, we have to pay an additional cost of HK\$2 billion for the project. Therefore, the Consultant commissioned to undertake the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Study for Stage II of SSDS has to take the improvement in water quality, such as the reduction of "red tide" in the southern waters of Hong Kong, into full consideration.

The conduct of EIA Study for SSDS is governed by the procedures provided for in the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (EIAO), which came into operation in April this year, as well as the guidelines and criteria prescribed in the Technical Memorandum. Under the relevant provisions, exhibition should be held and public consultation has to be made for the project concerned. Relevant authority in neighbouring regions has to be consulted also if the marine environment of their territorial waters was to be affected by the project. Thus far, not a single EIA report approved by the Advisory Council on the Environment has been produced, neither has adequate consultation been made with the relevant authority of neighbouring regions, professional bodies and the general public. Yet, contrary to the procedures laid down in the EIAO, the project is introduced for discussion at the LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs hastily. Therefore, we don't think the Panel should discuss the report at this stage. We firmly believe that for a large-scale works programme which has such far-reaching implications, support from the relevant authority of neighbouring regions, professional bodies and the general public is necessary for carrying out the project.

(signed)

Professor Hon NG Ching-fai
and Hon CHOY So-yuk