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Letterhead of GREENPEACE

**Management, Regulation and Disposal of Clinical Waste**

**A presentation from Greenpeace at the Legislative Council Panel on Health Services and Panel on Environmental Affairs**

**Greenpeace opposes to the incineration of clinical waste** as a disposal technology at the Chemical Waste Treatment Centre (CWTC).

- incineration of clinical waste generates dioxin
- incineration is only a pre-treatment, not a disposal method because the resulting toxic ash still need to be disposed of at a landfill

**What wrong with dioxin?**

1. Highly toxic : hazardous in extremely small doses
2. Persistent : highly stable and tends to accumulate up the food chain and remains in the environment for decades
3. Bio-accumulative : accumulate in human when contaminated food is consumed
4. Endocrine disrupting : alters development and undermine our ability to learn, flight disease and reproduce
5. Mobile : capable of travelling long distances as far as to the Arctic
6. In the elimination list by the United Nation Environmental Programme
  - The United Nations Environmental Programme has called the Governments of the world to develop action plans to reduces and/or eliminate dioxin release to the environment so that human will be protected.
7. Dioxin emission from the Chemical Waste Treatment Centre may be underestimated
  - A study was published in 1998 when dioxin emission was measured from a municipal waste incinerator in Belgium. A standard 6-hour sampling was to compare with a 15-day continuous sampling. The study suggested that the standard measurement underestimate the average emission by a factor of 30 to 50.

**Alternatives available**

Non-burn technologies such as autoclave, microwave, chemical treatments are not only available, but widely accepted as a pre-treatment of clinical waste. These technologies combined with good waste minimization and segregation provides a safer, cheaper and more environmentally accepted solution.

In the discussion paper presented today by the Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau, shortcomings of the alternative technologies was pointed out. Incineration is not without its disadvantages but are not presented with equal emphasis in the paper. These non-burn technologies deserve comprehensive study. The government should research into these technologies, compare not only their costs but also which technology can achieve the objectives with the least pollution.

**Greenpeace's recommendations:**

- 1) Vote AGAINST funding for the modification of the Chemical Waste Treatment Centre to burn medical waste;
- 2) Demand the Hospital Authority and the Health Department to do their utmost to minimize the generation of medical waste;
- 3) Encourage the Hospital Authority and the Health Department to use existing non-incineration facilities to treat medical waste on-site before disposal;
- 4) Demand the Environmental Protection Department to come up with cheaper, safer and the least polluting alternatives.