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Panel on Environmental Affairs

Meeting on 21 July 2010

**Background brief on
Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation
Environmental protection and ecology conservation
prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat**

Purpose

This paper sets out the co-operation areas on environmental protection and ecology conservation under the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation (the Framework Agreement), and gives a brief account of the views and concerns expressed at the meeting the Panel on Environmental Affairs (the Panel).

Background

2. In January 2009, the National Development and Reform Commission promulgated the “Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the Pearl River Delta (PRD)” (the Outline), establishing Hong Kong/Guangdong co-operation as a national policy. To take forward the implementation of the Outline, the Chief Executive and the Governor of Guangdong Province signed the Framework Agreement on 7 April 2010 in Beijing. The Framework Agreement defines clearly the development positioning of Hong Kong/Guangdong co-operation, including co-operation initiatives in environmental protection and ecology conservation.

Environmental protection and ecology conservation

3. The Framework Agreement has included the co-operation initiatives being undertaken or actively considered by the Hong Kong and Guangdong sides. The objectives are to improve the regional environmental quality and to transform the PRD region into a Green Quality Living Area. Key areas of co-operation under the Framework Agreement include -

- (a) concerted actions to prevent and tackle air pollution;
- (b) enhancing cleaner production in the region;
- (c) promoting wider use of electric vehicles;
- (d) co-operation in protecting marine water quality;
- (e) promoting the development of circular economy; and
- (f) co-operation in ecology and marine resource conservation.

The Framework Agreement also supports Guangdong and Hong Kong to work with Macao to jointly formulate a Regional Co-operation Plan on Quality Living Area to raise the quality of living environment in the region. Relevant extracts from the Framework Agreement are set out in the Annex to LC Paper No. CB(1) 1923/09-10(05) which is hyperlinked below for ease of reference.

Major concerns raised by the Panel

4. The co-operation initiatives on environmental protection and ecology conservation under the Framework Agreement were discussed at the Panel meeting on 24 May 2010. The Panel generally welcomed the signing of the Framework Agreement which had escalated the joint co-operation efforts in respect of environmental protection and ecology conservation between Hong Kong and Guangdong to a much higher level.

5. On concerted actions to prevent and tackle air pollution, members were concerned about the slow progress in tightening the fuel standards for motor vehicles and vessels in the Mainland. Given that fuel policy was a national policy, they enquired if a special arrangement could be made under the Framework Agreement to enable Guangdong to adopt more advanced fuel standards than the prevailing National III standard with a view to improving the regional air quality. There was also a need for the Mainland to set standards for water, air, and food quality with reference to the standards promulgated by the World Health Organization.

6. On promoting wider use of electric vehicles, members hoped that the successful experience of Hong Kong in encouraging the switch to liquefied petroleum gas taxis could be similarly applied to electric taxis with the concerted efforts from both sides. Efforts should also be made to facilitate the introduction of electric buses in Hong Kong with reference to the experience in the Mainland where some electric buses were already plying the streets of the World Expo in Shanghai.

7. Some members held the view that co-operation areas on water, electricity and energy infrastructure network under the Framework Agreement were also relevant to

the Panel. While agreeing to the need to progressively phase out coal-fired generation units, they could not support increasing the supply of nuclear energy, which could not be regarded as a clean source of energy given the risk associated with the storage of the resultant waste.

Latest development

8. To gauge views on the extent to which the public could participate in taking forward the co-operation initiatives on environmental protection and ecology conservation under the Framework Agreement, members have decided to invite interested parties to express their views at the Panel meeting on 21 July 2010.

Relevant papers

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Panel on Commerce and Industry meeting on 18 May 2010

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ci/papers/cicb1-1559-1-e.pdf>

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Panel on Environmental Affairs meeting on 24 May 2010

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0524cb1-1923-5-e.pdf>

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