



14th March

Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Chairman, Legco Panel on Food and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong
Email: panel_fseh@legco.gov.hk

Re: Ban on Trawling

The Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong (“SwedCham”) is pleased to submit the following statement to the Legco Panel on Food and Environmental Hygiene.

SwedCham, with some 170 corporate members, represents a wide range of Swedish and Swedish-related businesses in Hong Kong. SwedCham takes a pro-active approach to environmental issues of concern to Hong Kong. In the past, SwedCham has participated in the policy debate on a number of issues, including slope protection, the motor vehicle idling bill, and the ongoing climate change policy consultation.

As Legco considers a ban on trawling in Hong Kong waters, SwedCham would like to highlight the points below. Our key message is that unless immediate change to the status quo is implemented, dramatic and irreversible consequences may result.

We encourage the movement towards a sustainable seafood industry both for the sake of the survival of the fishing community and for the benefit of all people of Hong Kong – today and tomorrow. A total ban to trawling is a step in the right direction. Our reasoning being:

- 1) Only 10-15% of the seafood consumed in Hong Kong comes from local waters (*source: WWF Hong Kong*). Local fishermen are no longer able to meet local demand and trawling is only making things worse as it damages spawning grounds, important habitat for prey for fish and catches fish before they reach the age of reproduction.
- 2) Hong Kong has about a tenth of some 800 coral species in the world, and over 300 recorded fishes inhabiting coral and rocky reefs (*source: WWF Hong Kong*). This is a heritage valuable to protect. Certain corals and reefs can take thousands of years to grow back and are damaged in a couple of seconds by trawling.

Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

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The need of a ban on trawling in Hong Kong's waters is absolutely clear, but only with viable options will the fishing community be willing to follow the required regulations. A total ban at this stage is needed, but once healthy stocks are in place trawling could be allowed again if properly managed.

SwedCham thinks that the proposed ban could potentially pave the way for a future more sustainable fishing industry in Hong Kong. In order to make this a reality, an immediate trawling ban should be followed by an evaluation of best practices within sustainable fisheries, including financial aid to modernize harvest technologies, quota systems, "black-out" periods, and "black-out" zones. In order to keep the stock at healthy levels steps should be taken towards a more sustainable management of Hong Kong fisheries. Example of countries with good policies and governance in place are Norway, Iceland and New Zealand.

We are aware that there is currently an issue around compensation packages for those fishermen who will be affected. We urge the government to do their utmost to reach an appropriate consensus.

We thank you for the opportunity to get involved in the legislative process and look forward to a continued constructive dialogue in this and other matters.

Yours faithfully,

Stefan Rönquist, Chairman

Swedish Chamber of Commerce

Kristian Odebjør, Director & Chmn of
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