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Panel on Environmental Affairs

Meeting on 25 February 2013

**Background brief on "Introduction of a new
producer responsibility scheme for glass beverage bottles"
prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the introduction of a new mandatory producer responsibility scheme ("PRS") for glass beverage bottles, and the progress of implementation of PRSs for other specified products.

Background

2. In December 2005, the Administration published the Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014) ("the Policy Framework"), which set out the strategy and measures to reduce waste generation and promote waste recovery, reuse and recycling. The main vein of the strategy was to implement the "polluter pays" principle through municipal solid waste charging and introducing PRSs for specified products. Under PRS, manufacturers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers are required to share the responsibility for the collection, recycling, treatment and disposal of end-of-life products with a view to avoiding and reducing the environmental impacts caused by such wastes.

3. The Policy Framework recommends the introduction of PRS for the following six types of products, which have significant impacts on waste disposal and have been a stable source stream of materials to develop and sustain the local recycling industry –

- (a) Vehicle tyres;
- (b) Plastic shopping bags;
- (c) Electrical and electronic equipment;
- (d) Packaging materials;
- (e) Beverage containers; and
- (f) Rechargeable batteries.

4. To provide a legislative framework for the implementation of PRS in Hong Kong, the Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance (Cap. 603) ("the Ordinance") was enacted in July 2008. It is an enabling legislation to provide for the shared core elements of all PRSs and the fundamental regulatory requirements in respect of individual types of products, with operational details to be set out in subsidiary legislation when the opportunity is ripe.

5. Amongst the six types of products mentioned in paragraph 3 above, the Administration has taken measures to implement PRSs on plastic shopping bags and waste electrical and electronic equipment ("WEEE"), details of which are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Environmental Levy Scheme on Plastic Shopping Bags

6. The environmental levy on plastic shopping bags is the first PRS implemented under the Ordinance to discourage the indiscriminate use of plastic shopping bags. The levy scheme came into operation in July 2009 following the passage of the Product Eco-responsibility (Plastic Shopping Bags) Regulation. As announced in the 2013 Policy Address, the Administration is preparing legislative proposals to extend the Environmental Levy Scheme on Plastic Shopping Bags.

Producer responsibility scheme for waste electrical and electronic equipment

7. WEEE, mainly comprising television sets, washing machines, refrigerators, air conditioners and computer products, contains hazardous components that are harmful to the environment and human health if it is disposed of improperly. The Administration conducted a public consultation exercise in 2010 to solicit public views on the introduction of a mandatory PRS by legislation for proper management of WEEE. In general, members of the public and stakeholders were supportive of the mainstream proposals under the proposed PRS for WEEE.

8. The Panel on Environmental Affairs discussed the major principles drawn up by the Administration to take forward the proposed PRS for WEEE at its meetings on 25 January, 22 February and 29 March 2010 as well as 28 November 2011. Members generally supported the principles of PRS for WEEE, but were concerned about the implementation details of the scheme,

particularly on the sharing of cost among stakeholders, feasibility of acquiring a competent WEEE Management Contractor, assistance to be provided by the Administration, and fee level. The Administration has advised that it will further engage the trades and stakeholders on the implementation details of a mandatory PRS on WEEE in an in-depth manner. In the 2013 Policy Address, the Administration states that it will set up facilities for treating WEEE.

Recycling of waste glass

9. As mentioned in the 2013 Policy Address, the Administration will continue to expedite the progressive implementation of mandatory PRSs, with priority accorded to glass beverage bottles.

10. In 2010, an average of 374 tonnes of waste glass was disposed of at landfills in Hong Kong everyday, which accounted for about 4.1% of the total disposal of municipal solid waste. 80% of such waste glass was waste glass bottles which were mainly recovered for reuse or recycled locally. In this respect, the Government's policy is to encourage and practise the use of products containing recycled glass through the promotion of green procurement. The Administration aims to engage different stakeholders to share their eco-responsibility for the proper handling of waste glass containers. It has been working with the trades and relevant organizations to develop and implement voluntary glass container recycling programmes to help promote recycling of waste glass in Hong Kong. Glass containers collected through such programmes are mainly recycled for use as raw materials in the production of green building materials.

11. To encourage the general public to participate in the recycling of glass bottles, the Environmental Protection Department, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Housing Authority, launched the Pilot Programme on Source Separation of Glass Bottles at six public rental housing estates in East Kowloon in late 2010. Besides, the Administration is exploring potential outlets for gainful reuse of source-separated glass cullet, in particular in its application in construction works. For example, the Highways Department has mandated in their road maintenance contracts the priority use of concrete paving blocks with recycled glass. Other government departments have also started using these paving blocks in their suitable projects, thus help to foster the local glass recycling industry. It is anticipated that both the recovery of glass bottles and development of the local recycling industry will be enhanced.

Voluntary producer responsibility schemes

12. Apart from the above, the Administration has been supporting the relevant trades in implementing voluntary PRSs for compact fluorescent lamps and fluorescent tubes, computers, rechargeable batteries and glass bottles. The achievement of these voluntary PRSs as at April 2012 is as follows –

- (a) compact fluorescent lamps and fluorescent tubes: about 1.4 million compact fluorescent lamps and tubes have been recovered since the recovery scheme was launched in March 2008;
- (b) computers: about 76 000 items of computer products have been recovered since the recovery scheme was launched in January 2008;
- (c) rechargeable batteries: 317 tonnes of rechargeable batteries have been recovered since the recovery scheme was launched in April 2005; and
- (d) glass bottles: over 3 200 tonnes of waste glass have been recovered since November 2008 through a number of recovery schemes.

13. The Administration has undertaken to regularly monitor the situation of waste generation, and will consider the feasibility in introducing new mandatory PRSs for other products.

Council questions

14. Hon CHAN Kin-por, Hon KAM Nai-wai, Hon Andrew LEUNG and Hon Paul TSE raised questions relating to glass bottle recycling at the Council meetings on 21 October 2009, 3 February and 27 October 2010, 2 March and 7 December 2011, and 25 April 2012. Details of the Council questions are hyperlinked in the **Appendix** for ease of reference.

Relevant papers

15. A list of relevant papers is set out in the **Appendix**.

Appendix

List of relevant papers

Council/ Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Environmental Affairs	25 January 2010	<p>Information paper on "A New Producer Responsibility Scheme for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment" provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)915/09-10(07)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0125cb1-915-7-e.pdf</p> <p>Background brief on producer responsibility scheme for waste electrical and electronic equipment prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(1)915/09-10(08)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0125cb1-915-8-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1441/09-10) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/minutes/ea20100125.pdf</p>
Panel on Environmental Affairs	22 February 2010	<p>Information paper on "A New Producer Responsibility Scheme for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment" provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)1123/09-10(01)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0222cb1-1123-1-e.pdf</p> <p>Updated background brief on a new producer responsibility scheme for waste electrical and electronic equipment prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(1)1123/09-10(02)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0222cb1-1123-2-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1660/09-10) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/minutes/ea20100222.pdf</p>

Council/ Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Environmental Affairs	29 March 2010	<p>Information paper on "A New Producer Responsibility Scheme for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment" provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)1443/09-10(06)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0329cb1-1443-6-e.pdf</p> <p>Updated background brief on a new producer responsibility scheme for waste electrical and electronic equipment prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(1)1443/09-10(07)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0329cb1-1443-7-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)1922/09-10) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/minutes/ea20100329.pdf</p>
Panel on Environmental Affairs	28 November 2011	<p>Information paper on "A New Producer Responsibility Scheme for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment" provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)424/11-12(03)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/ea/papers/ea1128cb1-424-3-e.pdf</p> <p>Updated background brief on a new producer responsibility scheme for waste electrical and electronic equipment prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(1)424/11-12(04)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/ea/papers/ea1128cb1-424-4-e.pdf</p> <p>Minutes of meeting (LC Paper No. CB(1)853/11-12) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/ea/minutes/ea20111128.pdf</p>
Panel on Environmental Affairs	28 January 2013	<p>Information paper on "2013 Policy Address – Policy Initiatives of Environment Bureau: Environmental protection" provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)431/12-13(02)) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/ea/papers/ea0128cb1-431-2-e.pdf</p>

Hyperlinks to relevant Council Questions:

Date	Council Question
21 October 2009	Council question raised by Hon CHAN Kin-por http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200910/21/P200910210264.htm
3 February 2010	Council question raised by Hon KAM Nai-wai http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201002/03/P201002030176.htm
27 October 2010	Council question raised by Hon KAM Nai-wai http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201010/27/P201010270175.htm
2 March 2011	Council question raised by Hon Andrew LEUNG http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201103/02/P201103020202.htm
7 December 2011	Council question raised by Hon Paul TSE http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201112/07/P201112070205.htm
25 April 2012	Council question raised by Hon KAM Nai-wai http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201204/25/P201204250243.htm