

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

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**Panel on Environmental Affairs**

**Special meeting on 29 March 2016**

**Background brief on public consultation on  
Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Hong Kong  
prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the public consultation on Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan ("BSAP") for Hong Kong. It also gives a brief account of the major views and concerns expressed by Members when related issues were discussed by the relevant committees of the Legislative Council in the 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 legislative sessions.

**Background**

Convention on Biological Diversity

2. Biodiversity refers to different plants, animals and micro-organisms that make up a variety of ecosystems.<sup>1</sup> It also refers to the genetic diversity of each of these organisms, and the differences in the ecosystems themselves. Biodiversity is commonly regarded as a key determinant of the benefits and services delivered by the natural environment or ecosystems, i.e. the more variation within each species, the more likely the natural environment can sustain itself as conditions change. Biodiversity also serves as a measure of how stable ecosystems are, particularly when physical conditions change.

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<sup>1</sup> "Biodiversity" is a word created from the two words "biological" and "diversity", meaning living and variation respectively. Biodiversity is usually explored at three levels: genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity.

3. In 1992, 150 government leaders signed a "Convention on Biological Diversity" ("the Convention"),<sup>2</sup> with the objectives to conserve biodiversity, promote sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and a fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. China joined the Convention in 1993 and extended the Convention to Hong Kong in 2011.<sup>3 4</sup>

4. Article 6 of the Convention provides that countries which have ratified the Convention should develop national strategies, plans or programmes for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity or equivalent measures, or adapt existing ones for this purpose, according to their particular conditions and capabilities. While there is no obligation under the Convention to formulate a city-level BSAP, the Administration is developing Hong Kong's BSAP with a view to contributing to global efforts on biodiversity.

#### Consultation on Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

5. On 8 January 2016, the Administration released a consultation document entitled "Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Hong Kong" ("the Consultation Document"),<sup>5</sup> which outlined the following four major areas for action over the next five years:

- (a) *Conservation*: to implement and enhance/add to existing conservation measures;
- (b) *Mainstreaming*: to continue to strengthen internal mainstreaming within the administration and incorporate biodiversity considerations into the Government's plans, projects and programmes according to the particular situation in Hong Kong;
- (c) *Knowledge*: to increase understanding of biodiversity by conducting surveys and studies, consolidating data, and encouraging organizations to launch research to fill knowledge gaps identified; and

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<sup>2</sup> The Convention was signed at the "Earth Summit" held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. To date, 196 countries and organizations have ratified or accepted the Convention.

<sup>3</sup> China announced its first national BSAP in 1994 and published in 2010 an update to the plan for the next 20 years in "China's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2030).

<sup>4</sup> Hong Kong is not a Party to the Convention.

<sup>5</sup> The consultation exercise will last for three months and end on 7 April 2016. The Consultation Document is hyperlinked in the Appendix.

- (d) *Community involvement*: to engage partners in promoting public awareness, and build support and collaboration with various sectors such as the agricultural, fisheries, business and professional sectors as well as relevant non-governmental organizations, with a view to raising public awareness and understanding of biodiversity conservation as an important area of focus of the first BSAP for Hong Kong.

### Ongoing conservation work

6. The Government's ongoing conservation work falls into the following categories:

- (a) *Protection of natural landscapes and habitats*: to identify valuable habitats and then protect them by law or by zoning;
- (b) *Species conservation*: to protect wild plants and animals (particularly native species) through laws, monitoring, species recovery programmes, and control of invasive alien species;
- (c) *Partnerships with public and private organizations*: to enhance conservation on priority sites for enhanced conservation through public-private partnership scheme and management agreement scheme;
- (d) *Communication, education and public awareness*: to raise public awareness and understanding of the importance of biodiversity conservation;
- (e) *Sustainable fisheries and agriculture*: to promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture while protecting fisheries resources; and provide support to local agriculture sector to develop modern and environmental-friendly farming technologies with emphasis on preservation of natural resources and the agricultural ecology;
- (f) *Land use planning and planning control and environmental impact assessment*: to protect areas with conservation value from intrusion of urban development, and ensure, through operation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance (Cap. 499), that the potential ecological impact of designated projects are avoided or mitigated at the project planning stage;

- (g) *Sustainable development*: to assess at the planning stages of new strategic initiatives or major programmes of the Government the impact that the proposed initiatives or programmes will have on environmental, social and economic conditions of Hong Kong;
- (h) *"Greening" urban ecosystems*: to restore green spaces to the urban landscape throughout Hong Kong through plans, projects, technical guidelines and assessment tools;
- (i) *Pollution control*: to safeguard water quality in Hong Kong's freshwater and marine habitats, in particular in relation to sewerage, chemical waste, improper discharge and marine refuse; and
- (j) *Reducing greenhouse gases and climate adaptation*: to reduce carbon intensity and set targets with a view to mitigating climate change.

### **Major views and concerns expressed by Members**

7. Issues relating to BSAP were raised at the meeting of the Panel on Environmental Affairs ("the Panel") on 22 February 2016 when the Administration briefed the Panel on the protection of endangered species and biodiversity in Hong Kong, and during examination of the Estimates of Expenditures 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. The major views and concerns raised by Members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### Public engagement

8. In view of the wide scope of the subject, Members enquired about the parties and processes involved in the consultation on the first BSAP for Hong Kong. The Administration advised that a three-tier BSAP Advisory Committee was set up in 2013 to assist in the formulation of the plan. It consisted of a Steering Committee, three Working Groups (namely Terrestrial Biodiversity Working Group, Marine Biodiversity Working Group, and Awareness, Mainstreaming and Sustainability Working Group), and 12 Focus Groups. The Advisory Committee included biodiversity experts and academics, as well as representatives from non-government organizations, professional bodies, universities, rural communities, private and public sectors and relevant government officials.

9. The Administration advised that apart from the BSAP Advisory Committee, it would also consult other relevant government advisory committees and various stakeholders such as district councils, academics, environmental groups, commercial sectors, rural communities and agricultural and fisheries organizations. Open forums would be held for the general public. All views received would be carefully considered before finalizing BSAP for implementation in the coming years. Some Members opined that as the term "biodiversity" might not be readily comprehensible to the general public, the Administration should step up publicity with a view to enhancing public understanding of the concept. The Administration took note of the view and suggestion.

10. Members noted that the Administration stated certain disclaimers in the Consultation Document stressing, among other things, that none of the proposals, aspirations or ideas raised therein represented or constituted any decision made by the Government or any public officer or should give rise to any rights or expectations in respect of those proposals, aspirations or ideas. These disclaimers had drawn criticism from some Members as they seemed to reflect the Government's lack of commitment in formulating BSAP and related measures for Hong Kong.

11. The Administration assured Members of its determination to conserve biodiversity. It had been working on a five-year BSAP for Hong Kong since 2013 and considered the recommendations made by the Steering Committee.<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of collating public views before mapping out BSAP, the consultation document set out the framework of four major areas of action (i.e. conservation, mainstreaming, knowledge, and community involvement) which represented the key directions for enhancing biodiversity conservation and supporting sustainable development in Hong Kong. Specific actions under each area would be developed after taking into account the views and feedbacks collected from the public consultation.

#### Measures to publicize and promote biodiversity

12. It was proposed in the BSAP consultation document that a new permanent exhibition gallery on biodiversity might be set up in the Hong Kong Science Museum. Some Members considered that this might not reap sufficient publicity and educational effect, and suggested the Administration develop a large-scale

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<sup>6</sup> The Steering Committee, as the top tier of the Advisory Committee, had made a set of recommendations for the Government to consider after 18 months of stakeholder engagement and deliberation. The full set of the recommendations is available at [www.afcd.gov.hk/bsap](http://www.afcd.gov.hk/bsap).

designated natural history museum with multi-media facilities for the community to explore and understand the nature, and appreciate the importance of biodiversity.

13. The Administration advised that it had considered museums/exhibitions of different scales, and taking into account various factors including the scope and type of exhibits, planning time and operation mode, the proposal of a permanent exhibition gallery in the Hong Kong Science Museum was considered more manageable with the current resources.

14. There was a suggestion that the Administration should maintain a register of local species, and rare and new species of plants and animals in particular. The Administration responded that it had already established the Hong Kong Herbarium, which was the first public herbarium in China, and published a variety of publications including "Flora of Hong Kong", "Check List of Hong Kong Plants" and "Rare and Precious Plants of Hong Kong".

#### Invasion of alien species

15. Some Members expressed concern over the impact of white popinac (*Leucaena leucocephala* (銀合歡)), an invasive alien species, on the biodiversity of Hong Kong, and criticized the various government departments of Hong Kong for not having taken the matter seriously by taking concerted actions to deal with the problem. They urged the Administration to include an area of action in BSAP to focus efforts on dealing with invasive alien species.

16. The Administration advised that it had put in place control measures to deal with invasive alien species, in particular those which posed greater threats to the local ecology, such as mikania (*Mikania micrantha* (薇甘菊)). It was observed that the impact of white popinac was relatively smaller given the mere existence of the plant on roadside or construction sites at present. Nevertheless, the Administration would continue to monitor the situation and take control measures as necessary.

#### Protecting fisheries resources and activities

17. Some Members stressed the need to maintain a proper balance between conservation of biodiversity and human activities including fish farming. For instance, they considered it undesirable that fish cultured in the fish ponds continued to fall prey to wild birds which were protected by the law from being trapped or killed, resulting in depletion of the fish stock and financial loss to the

fish farmers. The Administration advised that the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department had recommended measures to assist fish farmers in preventing wild birds from preying on the fish they raised, with a view to building up a harmonious relationship between local fish farming and bird conservation. Funding was provided under the Environmental and Conservation Fund to support Nature Conservation Management Agreement projects to encourage fish farmers to adopt traditional and ecologically sustainable operation regime to manage their fish ponds.

### **Council question**

18. At the Council meeting on 11 November 2015, Mr CHAN Hak-kan raised a question relating to prevention of alien species' invasion. Issues covered in the questions include the measures to prevent and mitigate the impacts of alien species on the local natural environment and the progress of formulating BSAP. The question and the Administration's reply are hyperlinked in the **Appendix**.

### **Relevant papers**

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

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
22 March 2016

**Public consultation on  
Biodiversity Strategy and Actifon Plan for Hong Kong**

**List of relevant papers**

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Paper</b>
1 April 2014	Special meeting of Finance Committee for examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2014-2015	Written questions raised by Members and Administration's replies (Reply serial numbers: <a href="#">ENB110, 135 and 256</a> )
30 March 2015	Special meeting of Finance Committee for examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2015-2016	Written question raised by Member and Administration's reply (Reply serial number: <a href="#">ENB303</a> )
22 February 2016	Meeting of the Panel on Environmental Affairs	Administration's paper on update on the protection of endangered species and biodiversity in Hong Kong (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)557/15-16(04)</a> )  Background brief on protection of endangered species and biodiversity in Hong Kong prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. <a href="#">CB(1)557/15-16(05)</a> )

**Hyperlinks to relevant documents:**

<b>Government bureau/department</b>	<b>Documents</b>
The Environment Bureau and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	Public consultation on "Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Hong Kong"  <a href="#">Press release</a>  <a href="#">Public consultation document</a>

**Hyperlink to relevant Council Question:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Council Question</b>
11 November 2015	<a href="#">Press release</a> on Council question (written) raised by Mr CHAN Hak-kan