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16 October 2019

Chief Council Secretary (1)1
Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road, Central
Hong Kong
(Attention: Ms. Angel SHEK)

Dear Ms. Shek,

Panel on Environmental Affairs

Follow-up to meeting on 25 March 2019

I refer to the motion passed under agenda item IV “Review of Air Quality Objectives” at the meeting of the Panel on Environmental Affairs on 25 March 2019, our response is set out in the Annex for Members’ perusal please.

Yours faithfully,

(Dave T. Y. HO)
for Director of Environmental Protection

Encl.

Administration's response to the motion passed under agenda item IV
"Review of Air Quality Objectives" at the meeting on 25 March 2019

The Government has all along been putting forward and implementing various emission reduction measures to improve air quality and safeguard public health, with a view to attaining the ultimate targets of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Air Quality Guidelines (AQGs) as our final goal.

2. Of the 12 prevailing Air Quality Objectives (AQOs) in Hong Kong, six of them have already adopted the ultimate targets of the WHO AQGs. To attain the ultimate targets of the WHO AQGs, the Government will review the AQOs every five years in accordance with the law and assess the progress of air quality improvement for deciding the AQOs for the next five years.

3. The Environment Bureau reported the findings and recommendations of the AQOs review to Members of the Panel on Environmental Affairs at its meeting on 25 March. The recommendations include tightening the annual and 24-hour AQOs for fine suspended particulates (PM_{2.5}) and the 24-hour AQO for sulphur dioxide (SO₂). We explained in the meeting that the proposed new 24-hour AQO for PM_{2.5} at Interim Target-2 (50µg/m³) with number of allowable exceedances in a year at 35 is more stringent than the prevailing 24-hour AQO at Interim Target-1 (75µg/m³) with 9 allowable exceedances.

4. Historical data of our air quality monitoring network demonstrate that the proposed 24-hour AQO for PM_{2.5} (50µg/m³ and 35 exceedances allowed in a year) is more stringent than the prevailing AQO (75µg/m³ and 9 exceedances allowed in a year). Between 2011 and 2017, the ambient air quality monitoring network recorded 17 exceedances against the prevailing 24-hour AQO for PM_{2.5}, but 30 exceedances against the proposed new AQO. This suggests that our air quality, after attaining the prevailing AQO, has to continuously improve in order to meet the proposed new AQO.

5. In addition, as the regional background concentrations of respirable suspended particulates (PM₁₀) and ozone (O₃) are relatively high, the 2025 air quality assessments show that concentrations of these pollutants in most parts of Hong Kong in 2025 will still exceed the next higher WHO interim target levels. Hence there is no scope to further tighten the AQOs for PM₁₀ and O₃. The Government will continue to work

closely with other places in the region to improve regional air quality and explore further tightening the relevant AQOs in the next review (i.e. 2019-2013).

6. The Government launched a 3-month public consultation on the review findings from 12 July to 11 Oct this year. We are consolidating and analysing the views received, and will consult this Panel on the final recommendations.