

## Hong Kong Civil Society Delegation to Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change Position Paper

### I. Preamble

1. The civil society organizations in Hong Kong would like to present our stance on local climate strategies in the context of international climate negotiations at United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark from 7 to 18 December 2009.
2. The summit has to map out a holistic strategy that could effectively mobilize all members of international community to combat climate change in the long term. We do not have the luxury of time to conclude a global climate agreement without the endorsement and participation of every single country and region. All global citizens should push aside individual interests and collaborate for the well-being and long-term benefits of mankind.
3. Hong Kong is a very wealthy and prosperous city with GDP per capita ranked 7th in the world in 2008.<sup>1</sup> In light of our relative affluence, it would be our privilege to perform a greater role in reversing global warming.

### II. Challenges

4. The global temperature has increased by 0.74 °C in the last century due to the human emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) (mainly carbon dioxide, CO<sub>2</sub>) by fossil burning and deforestation.<sup>2</sup> Rising temperature and other climatic consequences are broadly expected to adversely affect human activities at large. To prevent dangerous and irreversible climate change, all members of the international community need to work collectively in a bid to keep the global average temperature rise below 2°C as compared with pre-industrial level.<sup>3</sup>
5. In Hong Kong, we can also feel the adverse effects of climate change. Our average temperature has already increased almost 1.5°C since 1885. Hong Kong Observatory predicts that in the decade of 2030, the average annual number of cold days in winter is expected to drop below one.<sup>4</sup> Extreme weather conditions are more likely to happen in Hong Kong, ranging from heat wave, heavy rains, flooding, landslides to droughts. Hong Kong would eventually suffer from higher social and business costs, such as: higher ventilation costs, shortage of water, rising food prices, etc.
6. There should be a mindset change in relation to our role in campaigns combating climate change in the international arena. In fact, Hong Kong should take up a larger share of the responsibility of fighting climate change as our per capita GHG emission is around 6 tons, twice the world average.<sup>5</sup> In 2007, we emitted 46 700 kilotons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (kt. of CO<sub>2</sub>-eq), which was 19 per cent above the 1990 level (i.e. 39 200 kt of CO<sub>2</sub>-eq). To justify the lack of carbon reduction targets, the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has stated that being “part of China,” Hong Kong was “not required under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to meet specific emission targets.”<sup>6</sup>
7. From the global perspective, an international agreement that can win the blessing of all countries around the world is by no means an easy task. There are significant differences in opinions between the developed and developing countries in regards to the sharing of emission reduction targets as well as who should bear how much of the responsibility for providing resources and technical support to poorer and/or developing countries to facilitate

<sup>1</sup> International Monetary Fund, “World Economic Outlook Database,” <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2009/01/weodata/index.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia, “Global Warming”, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_warming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_warming)

<sup>3</sup> World Wide Fund, *A New Climate Deal: A Pocket Guide*, 2009,

[http://www.panda.org/about\\_our\\_earth/all\\_publications/?168985/The-New-Climate-Deal---A-Pocket-Guide](http://www.panda.org/about_our_earth/all_publications/?168985/The-New-Climate-Deal---A-Pocket-Guide)

<sup>4</sup> Hong Kong Observatory, “Climate Change,” [http://www.weather.gov.hk/climate\\_change/climate\\_change\\_e.htm](http://www.weather.gov.hk/climate_change/climate_change_e.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Oxfam Hong Kong, “Every Little Help Counts”, [http://www.oxfam.org.hk/public/contents/press?ha=&wc=0&hb=&hc=&revision\\_id=63629&item\\_id=63628](http://www.oxfam.org.hk/public/contents/press?ha=&wc=0&hb=&hc=&revision_id=63629&item_id=63628)

<sup>6</sup> Environmental Protection Department (EPD), “Climate Change: Cooperation with International Community,” [http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/climate\\_change/coop\\_int.html](http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/climate_change/coop_int.html)

emissions reduction. Emissions will continue to rise if no agreement is concluded as current commitments and actions are largely insufficient.

### III. Principles

#### A. “Common but Differentiated Responsibilities” (CDR)

8. We believe that the principle of CDR could address the needs and concerns of both developed and developing countries. Under this principle, developed countries continue to assume greater responsibilities in emissions reduction while developing ones have to undertake “Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions” as well. The developed countries should maintain their hard targets to compensate for their historical cumulative emissions and to reduce their current high per capita emissions. They should, moreover, provide adequate levels of financial, technology and capacity building support to developing countries. The developing countries, particularly the emerging and high emission countries, should commit to adopt “Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions” (hereafter called NAMAs). The scope of CDR should be flexible enough to help achieve the needs required for sustainable development. Greater efforts should also be paid to other effective ways in cutting carbon emission in these countries through preserving forests, reducing methane and black carbon, etc.
9. The principle of CDR should be extended from the national level to regional and/or local levels within a country. It is not unusual for different localities or regions to be in different stages of development and therefore more economically advanced regions can do more in emissions reduction.
10. Under the principle of “One Country Two Systems,” there is much room for Hong Kong to act to promote the adoption of emission reduction targets. Our economic and fiscal magnitude also enables us to perform like a developed city different from other parts of the country. Hong Kong is in a privileged position to be able to serve as an example for the implementation of CDR within “one country.”
11. To effectively combat climate change, the international agreement, as well as the commitments of individual countries and regions, must include four major aspects: mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance. Other than the general concern on mitigation measures, there should be sufficient funding for the least developed countries to adapt to climate change. International cooperation on technological and financial assistance would be of equal importance to facilitate these countries to do their part in tackling global warming.

#### B. HKSAR Government as an Enabler

12. The HKSAR Government (hereafter the Government) should demonstrate leadership and steer the direction for a healthy and sustainable development through setting reduction targets and establishing an effective regulatory regime. The Government must first take the lead on setting a long-term vision for what Hong Kong as a world class low carbon (or carbon neutral) city will look like by 2050. Having an ultimate vision will help provide the framework for the development of not only the adaptation plan, but will also set the scene for driving mitigation (emissions reductions) as well. Without this vision, any adaptation or mitigation measures implemented with a short term perspective could translate into a waste of time and other resources. A clear commitment and corresponding measures could help mobilize the community at large, private sector and civil society organizations.
13. We also urge the Government to set an example for the community in emissions reduction. Government buildings should take the lead in the compliance of energy efficient building design. Green procurement can benefit the development of local green industries and eco-friendly production.
14. The Government should commit to a mitigation plan with commitments to deepen emissions reduction. To ensure smooth implementation of the mitigation measures, it would be important to maintain a level playing field for the business sector.

15. The Government should also develop a comprehensive adaptation plan for climate change in consultation with industry and the community.
16. As a part of this vision, the Government should aim at developing Hong Kong into a metropolitan equipped with advanced energy saving technology.
17. The Government should also commit to provide financial assistance to the poorer regions.

#### **C. Tripartite Participation**

18. The Government, the private sector and the community at large should collaborate to ensure the combat climate change campaign could be a success. Given that the enactment and full implementation of legislation might take a couple of years, it would be more effective if the business and domestic sectors can take immediate measures to save energy and cut emissions voluntarily. The Government should pay greater efforts to foster tripartite collaboration.
19. Based on the above principles, Hong Kong should consolidate an action plan which incorporates all measures initiated by various sectors of the community in tackling GHG emissions. All measures must be binding, measureable, reportable and verifiable, so that the community can easily monitor progress.

### **IV. Actions**

#### **A. Quantified reduction targets and comprehensive plans**

20. Positioning as Asia's world city, Hong Kong should assume the responsibilities of a developed metropolitan accordingly. It would be advisable for Hong Kong to voluntarily commit to an emissions reduction target of 25 per cent by 2020 as compared to 1990 levels (i.e. annual emission amounted to 29 400 kt. of CO<sub>2</sub>-eq), the lower standard as suggested at the United Nation Bali Climate Change Conference in December 2007.<sup>7</sup>
21. In consultation with the community and industry, the Government should set a reductions pathway in line with a 2050 city vision for Hong Kong.
22. In recognition that the fuel types used for Hong Kong's electricity generation is of critical importance towards achieving a low carbon future, the increased use of renewable energy should be considered by the Government and the community.
23. The Government should consult with all relevant sectors before filtering the hard targets to various sectors across the territories. For instance, there should be clear commitments from energy industries which contributed about 60 per cent of total emissions in Hong Kong.<sup>8</sup> A concrete goal of building energy savings and mandatory building energy codes should be in place as 89 per cent of local electricity consumption is buildings-related. It would be of equal importance to tackle other sources of GHG emissions, such as methane, as they contributed almost 15 per cent of total CO<sub>2</sub>-eq.
24. The Government should set its own carbon emission reduction targets for all the departments, moving towards carbon neutrality. Full implementation of green procurement should also be undertaken. Meanwhile, different governmental departments must be coordinated to provide adaptation measures for climate change, for instance, improving drainage system, developing heat alert system, etc.

#### **B. Collaboration and participatory process**

25. Territory-wide campaigns to combat climate change provide an important venue for the business sector and social organizations to demonstrate not only their (corporate) social responsibilities, but also their commitment to the

<sup>7</sup> World Wild Fund, The New Climate Deal: A Pocket Guide, <http://wwfchina.org/wwfpress/publication/gdl/climateguide.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> EPD, "Hong Kong Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions," [http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/climate\\_change/files/GHG\\_Emission\\_Trend\\_1990\\_2007.pdf](http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/climate_change/files/GHG_Emission_Trend_1990_2007.pdf)

well-being of mankind. We call for the collaboration of the business sector and their genuine partnership with other parties to ensure the campaign could be a success. They can involve and contribute in a wide spectrum of issues, ranging from identification of problems, participation in strategic planning, formulation of innovative measures, provision of financial or technical support, knowledge-sharing and capacity building, etc.

26. Individual citizens also have an important role to play in the global campaign. Their influence is by no means restricted to personal lives as the collective strength of consumer power can eventually make a difference. In the long-term, the market mechanism will help to adjust and provide more eco-friendly products.
27. The Government should start to prepare Hong Kong for increasing environmental accountability through passing charges for environmental impacts to individual citizens and various business sectors. This is in line with the true spirit of the “polluter pays” and “producers’ responsibilities” principle.

**C. Technological transfer and financial support**

28. As a vibrant and wealthy world city, Hong Kong could be developed into a showcase in the adoption and application of advanced energy saving technology. Many companies in Hong Kong have the economic strength and resources to import and take advantage of state-of-the-art green technology. For small and medium-sized enterprises, the Government should jointly provide technological and financial support with business and professional organizations.
29. The Government should consider establishing a foundation to provide financial assistance to Mainland China and other developing regions in combating climate change.

**D. Regional cooperation**

30. The HKSAR Government should enhance cross-boundary cooperation with the Guangdong Province and cities in the Pearl River Delta in the areas of mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance.

9 October 2009

**Co-authors:**

The Professional Commons

Hong Kong People’s Council for Sustainable Development

**Supporting Organizations:**

Breakthrough

Greeners Action

Clear the Air

Greenpeace China

The Conservancy Association

Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement

Friends of the Earth (HK)

Hong Kong Social Workers’ General Union

Green Council

Produce Green Foundation

Green Power

**Contact Persons:**

Mr. Albert LAI (Chairperson of the Professional Commons; [albert.lai@procommons.org.hk](mailto:albert.lai@procommons.org.hk));

Mr. CHONG Chan-yau (Chairperson of Hong Kong People’s Council for Sustainable Development; [chanyau@hku.hk](mailto:chanyau@hku.hk))

**Websites:**

<http://www.procommons.org.hk/>

<http://www.susdevhk.org/index.php>