

Air Quality Objectives review

The Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB) proposed to tighten five prevailing Air Quality Objectives (AQOs) and set three new parameters introduced in the Global Air Quality Guidelines (AQGs) of the World Health Organization (WHO), and launched a two-month public consultation on August 31. The Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) was briefed at a meeting yesterday (September 4) on the findings on the review of the AQOs and the proposed updates of the AQOs. Apart from acknowledging the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government's achievements in improving the air quality of Hong Kong, the ACE also expressed their support on the proposed updates of the AQOs.

The air quality of Hong Kong has been improving continuously, with an over 40 per cent to 60 per cent reduction in major air pollutants and a significant enhancement of visibility over the past decade. The air quality of Hong Kong in 2022 was also the best since the return to the motherland.

The HKSAR Government announced the Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles, the Clean Air Plan for Hong Kong 2035 and the Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 (the Three Blueprints) in 2021, covering strategies for promoting the use of new energy transport technologies, combating climate change and achieving carbon neutrality in various aspects, as well as setting out a number of targets for the short, medium and long-term.

The current review of the AQOs has considered 21 air quality improvement measures with substantial emission reduction impacts by 2030 on basis of the Three Blueprints, and projected the air quality improvement by 2030 through air quality assessment. Based on the assessment results, the HKSAR Government proposed to tighten ~~five~~ five prevailing AQOs and set three new parameters introduced in the WHO AQGs. If the proposal is adopted, the 15 updated AQOs will all be benchmarked to the interim targets and AQG levels of the WHO AQGs, amongst which seven AQOs are set at the most stringent levels of the WHO.

A spokesman of the EEB said, "The AQOs of fine suspended particulates are proposed to be tightened to the interim target level 3 as set out in the WHO AQGs, which will be broadly in line with the standards of Japan, Singapore, Korea and the United States (US), and more stringent than those of the European Union (EU). According to the findings of the review, the AQO of annual nitrogen dioxide will remain at the WHO AQGs' interim target level 1, which is on par with the relevant standards of Singapore and the EU, and more stringent than those of Korea and the US."

The spokesman supplemented, "The air quality of Hong Kong has now reached its best level since the return to the motherland, and blue skies are part of people's daily lives. To further protect public health and improve air quality, the HKSAR Government will implement the various emission

reduction strategies as laid down in the Three Blueprints as planned, and through reviewing at least once every five years to explore suitable AQOs and formulate corresponding air quality management measures. We will also strengthen the collaboration with Guangdong authorities to tackle regional air quality management issues."

The EEB will arrange two public consultation forums to brief the public on the work and findings of the review of the AQOs and garner their views. Members of the public may visit the dedicated website of the public consultation (aqoreview.hk) for more details. The public consultation will end on October 31, 2023. The HKSAR Government will make the final recommendations after taking into account the outcome of the public consultation.