

First meeting of Hong Kong-Guangdong Joint Working Group on Environmental Protection and Combating Climate Change held in Guangzhou

The Secretary for the Environment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Mr Wong Kam-sing, and the Director-General of the Department of Ecology and Environment of Guangdong Province (GDDEE), Mr Lu Xiulu, today (December 12) co-chaired the first meeting of the Hong Kong-Guangdong Joint Working Group on Environmental Protection and Combating Climate Change (JWGEPPCC) in Guangzhou. The meeting reviewed the progress of collaboration between the two sides in 2019, and agreed on a work plan for 2020.

The JWGEPPCC was formed by the merger of the former Hong Kong-Guangdong Joint Working Group on Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection and the former Hong Kong-Guangdong Joint Liaison Group on Combating Climate Change.

In the past year, there has been smooth progress in collaboration between Hong Kong and Guangdong on various fronts including improving the air quality in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) region, protecting the water environment and enhancing co-operation in forestry and marine resources conservation as well as combating climate change (as detailed in Annex 1).

On improving air quality, under the PRD Regional Air Quality Management Plan, Hong Kong and Guangdong are implementing various measures and are monitoring their progress and effectiveness to meet the emission reduction targets for 2020. Both sides agreed to include the monitoring of ambient volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the PRD Regional Air Quality Monitoring Network and have started preparatory work. Hong Kong and Guangdong also launched a study on post-2020 regional air pollutant emission reduction targets and concentration levels (the Study).

On marine environment management, the trial of the Notification and Alert System on Marine Refuse has been functioning well since its debut in 2017. So far, it has been activated 18 times with notifications issued in response to heavy rainfall, flooding and other major environmental incidents, which enabled relevant government departments to take timely clean-up actions as required. In addition, the two sides jointly organised for the first time coastal clean-up activities this year to promote the message of keeping shorelines clean and joining hands in protecting the ocean.

The JWGEPPCC also endorsed the work plan for 2020 (as detailed in Annex 2). In addition to formulating the post-2020 regional air pollutant emission measures and targets, and predicting the expected air quality levels through the Study, Hong Kong and Guangdong will include ambient VOCs in their routine

monitoring to step up regional ozone control. The two sides will strengthen the collaboration on air quality forecasting for improving the forecasting capability of the PRD region. The two sides will also jointly explore technologies and measures to monitor marine refuse and tackle marine environmental incidents, with a view to further extending the co-operation among neighbouring cities in the region.

As regards the ecological environment, Hong Kong and Guangdong will foster in-depth exchanges and enhance collaboration in the development, management, conservation, staff training, publicity and education of nature reserves including forests and wetlands.

Officials of the Government of the HKSAR attending today's meeting included representatives of the Environment Bureau, the Development Bureau, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, the Buildings Department, the Civil Engineering and Development Department, the Department of Health, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the Environmental Protection Department, the Hong Kong Observatory, the Transport Department and the Water Supplies Department. Officials of the Guangdong side included representatives of the GDDEE, the Guangdong Provincial Development and Reform Commission, the Department of Industry and Information Technology of Guangdong Province, the Department of Science and Technology of Guangdong Province, the Department of Natural Resources of Guangdong Province, the Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of Guangdong Province, the Department of Transportation of Guangdong Province, the Water Resources Department of Guangdong Province, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of Guangdong Province, the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, the Guangdong Administration for Market Regulation, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the People's Government of Guangdong Province, the Guangdong Meteorological Service, the Guangdong Maritime Safety Administration, the Guangdong Academy of Sciences (Chinese Academy of Sciences Guangzhou Branch), the Environmental Monitoring Center of Guangdong Province, the Ecological and Environmental Bureau of Shenzhen and the Ecological and Environmental Bureau of Zhuhai. The JWGEPCCC mainly discusses and exchanges views on matters relating to environmental quality, natural resources, ecological environment, sustainable development and combating climate change of the two sides. Eight special panels have been set up under the JWGEPCCC to take forward the implementation of the co-operation initiatives.