

# Transcript of remarks by SEE at media session

The Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, learned about necropsy on the whale carcass at High Island Reservoir West Dam in Sai Kung in the afternoon today (August 1). He then met with the media together with the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, Dr Leung Siu-fai, and the Head of Zoological Operations and Conservation, Ocean Park cum Foundation Director, Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong, Mr Howard Chuk. Following is the transcript of remarks by Mr Tse:

Reporter: Two English questions from RTHK. The first one is for Mr Tse. Do you think the AFCD or the Government has done its utmost to protect the whale this time? Because there are criticisms from the conservationists saying that there is not proactive or prompt action from the authorities. And secondly, you said the legal framework can be reviewed to seek more power to be given to the AFCD to help the whale to leave Hong Kong. Would you elaborate? And you think how long this would take?

Secretary for Environment and Ecology: As Director Leung has explained, actually the AFCD, together with Ocean Park Conservation Fund, have been monitoring and participating in the protection of the whale from the very beginning. And they have been working day by day in order to protect the whale, as well as to find new ways to bring the whale back to the ocean. They have been working very hard on this. However, as explained by Director Leung, there were a lot of difficulties. For example, the whale can appear in this place, then disappear, and then reappear again in other places. And therefore how to protect it was complicated. And also there were different views among experts on whether and how they could bring the whale back to the ocean. After a lot of discussions with different experts, not only experts from the Ocean Park Conservation Fund, but also from local and overseas. I think what they could agree on was they should observe for a longer time. They needed more time to observe before they could decide how to bring the whale back to the ocean.

And yes, I think if the AFCD could have more immediate power to manage, for example the people who come to observe the whale, it may help. And therefore we will review whether the law can be adjusted to offer the AFCD colleagues more power to manage this sort of situation. As I have also mentioned, we will also try to develop a set of protocol to deal with this sort of situation in the future so that we can save the time for different experts to discuss how to do it. I believe this will make future actions quicker. And I will also ask the AFCD colleagues to go visit some overseas countries or cities which have more experiences in this sort of situations so that they can learn more and come back to Hong Kong in the future and handle this sort of situation more promptly and more competently. I think that will also help.

Reporter: When you said more power could be given to the AFCD, do you mean setting up no-boat areas or what do you mean exactly?

Secretary for Environment and Ecology: Actually we need to make a review first, whether they can set up a restricted area more quickly. It is an option but they may also require some other enforcement power to help them. Therefore, we will review all those together.