

Transcript of remarks by SEN

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, after officiating at the "Plastic Free Beach, Tableware First" campaign today (July 19):

Reporter: Secretary, two questions. Firstly, on the levy of glass bottles, some lawmakers argue today it may not be effective to really promote glass recycling, what do you think of that? Do you think the cost will be passed to customers? Secondly, on this campaign, the restaurants are just trying to avoid plastics, there is no total ban. Do you think that's good enough?

Secretary for the Environment: On the first question about the Producer Responsibility Scheme (PRS) on Glass Beverage Containers, we are making reference to overseas successful practices. So we think that it would be useful and would result in a higher level of recycling for Hong Kong, since under the scheme we engage the contractor and set a performance pledge to improve Hong Kong's recycling level of glass incrementally. So we are confident that it should be okay. Certainly, all these kind of PRSs are based on the polluter pays principle. That means the more you use, you have to be responsible for the associated cost. It's a fair system. Under the new scheme, we set the performance (pledge). The recycling level will be incrementally improved, it will be our goal. Your second question about these schemes set in other cities or countries – an incremental approach is also being taken. One very important thing is public education and campaign. Today's launch is to promote wider public education. The gazetted beaches, in particular during summer time, will be a very good timing and venue for us to talk about this. It is a very good venue associated with the ocean and marine lives. We can work together with our volunteers and green groups to promote that change. But we are not stopping here. As I have said, we will have other initiatives to promote similar practices in the government premises managed by the government and owned by the government. At the same time, we have the R&D (research and development team) to consider the overseas relevant laws and how they could be applied to Hong Kong. So we have a stepped-up approach to achieve our objective, that is to reduce disposable plastic in the ocean in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)