

**Confirmed Minutes of the 270th Meeting
of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE)
on 27 June 2025 at 2:30 p.m.**

Present:

Prof John CHAI, BBS, JP (Chairman)
Prof Kenneth LEUNG, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Mr CHEUNG Chi-wah
Ms Ada FUNG, BBS
Mr Eric HO
Ms Linda HO
Mr Alex KWAN
Ms Grace KWOK
Prof Alexis LAU, JP
Prof Dennis LEUNG
Mr Daryl NG, SBS, JP
Mr Albert SU, MH, JP
Prof WONG Kam-bo
Mr Jonathan WU
Mr Alan LO, JP (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Dr Theresa KWONG
Mr Simon NG
Prof QIU Jian-wen
Dr Raymond YAU
Dr William YU

In Attendance:

Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB)

Miss Mavis HUI	Chief Information Officer
Ms Karen CHEK	Chief Executive Officer (CBD)
Ms Cynthia LAU	Executive Officer (CBD) 1
Miss Glory CHONG	Executive Officer (CBD) 2

Environmental Protection Department (EPD)

Dr Samuel CHUI, JP	Director of Environmental Protection (DEP)
Dr Vanessa AU	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (1)
Mr Gary TAM	Assistant Director (Environmental Assessment)

Planning Department

Mr Kevin NG

Chief Town Planner / Technical Services

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)

Mr Simon CHAN

Assistant Director (Conservation)

In Attendance for Item 3:

EEB

Mr Desmond WU

Principal Assistant Secretary for Environment and Ecology
(Nature Conservation)

Miss Carmen TSANG

Assistant Secretary for Environment and Ecology (Nature
Conservation) 2

AFCD

Dr Flora MOK

Senior Conservation Officer (Biodiversity)

Dr Terence NG

Conservation Officer (Biodiversity) 1

Action

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and informed Members that apologies of absence had been received from Dr Theresa Kwong, Mr Simon Ng, Prof Qiu Jian-wen, Dr Raymond Yau and Dr William Yu.

Item 1 : Confirmation of the draft minutes of the 269th meeting held on 12 May 2025 (Closed-door session)

2. The draft minutes of the last meeting were confirmed without any proposed amendments.

Item 2 : Matters arising (Closed-door session)

3. There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

Item 3 : Update of Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ACE Papers 9/2025 and 10/2025)

4. The Chairman invited Members to refer to ACE Paper 9/2025 which provided an overview of the progress and achievements of the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP), as well as the latest global and national development of biodiversity conservation. A background note on the subject (ACE Paper 10/2025) was circulated to Members before the meeting.

5. There was no declaration of interest by Members.

(The presentation team joined the meeting at this juncture.)

Presentation cum Question-and-Answer Session (Open session)

6. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr Simon Chan gave an opening remark while Dr Flora Mok briefed Members on the latest developments in global and national biodiversity initiatives as well as Hong Kong's strengths in contributing to those initiatives. Members' views were sought on the proposed direction for updating the BSAP.

Update of the BSAP

7. The Chairman and a Member opined that AFCD should improve the presentation of the updated BSAP by mapping the four strategic areas and the relevant proposed actions against the 27 priority actions of the China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2030) (NBSAP) and the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) to avoid giving a wrong impression about Hong Kong's commitments. The Member emphasised the importance of the mapping as there were negative comments online on the seeming gap between the four proposed strategic areas and the 23 targets in KMGBF. Mr Simon Chan explained that the proposed direction in updating the BSAP was based on the targets set out in the NBSAP and KMGBF with reference to Hong Kong's unique situation and strengths. He said that AFCD would improve the presentation of the updated BSAP to better demonstrate Hong Kong's contributions within both national and international contexts.

8. To address a Member's questions, Mr Simon Chan explained that the target of conserving at least 30% of terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas by 2030 under the KMGBF was a global target to be achieved by the collective efforts of all countries with reference to their national circumstances, priorities and socio-economic conditions. As far as Hong Kong was concerned, more than 40% of its land and about 5% of its sea were currently protected areas. Even though the percentage was rather high as compared with other cities, Mr Chan said that Hong Kong would strive to make further contributions. As an example, Mr Chan said that the Government had substantially expanded the Sham Wan Restricted Area from the existing 0.5-hectare beach to the sea inlet adjoining the beach, covering more than 90 hectares of sea area of Lamma Island, to strengthen the protection of the sea turtle breeding ground.

9. A Member considered that key performance indicators (KPIs) on the expected achievements of Hong Kong by 2030 should be set alongside the list of specific measures in the updated BSAP. To facilitate easy understanding of the targets and wider participation in society, she suggested that the Government should highlight and publicise those areas where the public could make contributions. The

Chairman held the view that there should be a proper and comprehensive baseline for fair and accurate assessment of Hong Kong's performance in the implementation of the updated BSAP in the future. Mr Simon Chan stated that the next phase of the BSAP would consider adopting the City Biodiversity Index, a composite index recommended by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, a quantitative tool to support cities in evaluating and monitoring their biodiversity conservation progress relative to their own baselines.

10. A Member suggested that the Government should consider the role of fisheries, agricultural activities and the restoration of old villages in the overall nature conservation landscape. Mr Simon Chan said that AFCD would take the matters into account in the updated BSAP.

11. To achieve gender equality as mentioned in the KMGBF, a Member suggested and another Member echoed that the Government should take the lead to invite more female participation in committees related to nature conservation and environmental protection. Mr Simon Chan replied that the Government had set a benchmark for minimum female representation in public advisory bodies and committees and would continue to take the gender ratio into consideration in future appointments.

Nature Conservation

12. Highlighting Hong Kong's significant improvement in its biodiversity and water quality in the past ten years through trawl ban and the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS), a Member said that more organisms including 35 species of corals could now be found in the Victoria Harbour. He added that he had shared Hong Kong's successful experience in the HATS project and trawl ban for global reference at a United Nations conference. As a related matter, given that sunlight could penetrate through deeper water with the improved water quality, the Member considered that more flexible measures against climate change should be considered, such as coral species relying on photosynthesis could be planted in deeper water to improve their survival rate by avoiding the heat in summer.

13. Recognising the Government's efforts in setting up protected areas, including the new protected areas in the north of the airport, in the south of Lantau Island and the Robin's Nest Country Park, a Member indicated that a decline in fish population was observed in the southern waters as a result of intensive fishing by purse seine fishing vessels. The Member opined that a multipronged approach including a control of the fishing gears, fishing capacity of vessels, fishing practices and intensity etc. should be adopted in the policies to ensure sustainable fishing in the long run.

14. On restoration of degrading habitats, a Member held the view that there were more challenging issues than coral communities and seagrass. Citing the long-spined sea urchins as an example of invertebrate, he shared that there was a

substantial increase in their population due to the shortened reproduction cycle in connection with global warming. Coupled with a reduction in the supply of large algae under the warmer weather, the urchins would resort to plants growing on corals for food and they could mistakenly consume some corals during the process. In response to the Member's comments, Mr Simon Chan said that the Government would continue to implement and strengthen various conservation measures, taking into account emerging challenges and evolving environmental conditions.

15. A Member supplemented that the Government should consider adopting innovative technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) such as environmental DNA, remote sensing, smart lampposts and drones to improve work efficiency. He considered that Hong Kong should establish its own DNA database to support the implementation of the updated BSAP. Mr Simon Chan shared that AFCD had been using AI surveillance system to detect hill fire and illegal wild animal feeding activities round the clock and they would continue to explore the use of new technologies to enhance the effectiveness of biodiversity and nature conservation work. In addition, he said that the Government would encourage greater involvement from various sectors, particularly tertiary institutions, in conducting research on technological innovations to enhance ecological monitoring and biodiversity conservation.

16. Given that some Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) might no longer have much scientific value with the passage of time, a Member viewed that a thorough review should be conducted to keep the SSSIs up-to-date and there should be an overall consideration of the resources required for the protected areas. The Member also highlighted the need to review the current policies on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECM) and the possibility to adopt concepts like the ecological protection red line (EPRL). Mr Simon Chan indicated that AFCD would consider those recommendations, particularly by referencing the latest national updates on OECM and EPRL guidelines.

17. With reference to a Member's suggestion on a review of the existing legislation with a view to updating the obsolete provisions especially those on illegal hunting, Mr Simon Chan explained that the different ordinances involved in the protection of animals and plants had been reviewed from time to time. Quoting the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) as an example, Mr Chan said that the ordinance was last reviewed in 2024 where new clauses were added to prohibit the feeding of wild animals while penalties for violation were strengthened. He indicated that AFCD would continue to review the relevant legislation to better combat illegal hunting activities.

Publicity and Education

18. To introduce the concept of biodiversity and nature conservation to the younger generations, a Member indicated that there should be proper coverage of relevant content, which could be introduced from the perspectives of ecological

security and national policy, in the school curricula from kindergarten to university. the Member added that more citizen scientist programmes could be organised to encourage public and school participation in scientific research which could also generate data for enriching the biodiversity database. Mr Simon Chan shared that AFCD was working with the Education Bureau (EDB) in organising more experiential learning activities for kindergarten and primary school students while other promotional programmes were provided for tertiary institutions. In addition, AFCD and its partner organisations had organised various citizen science programmes, such as sparrow census, Hong Kong Reef Check and BioBlitz, to foster community involvement in biodiversity monitoring and data collection.

19. A Member held the view that students should be given more opportunities to get in contact with the nature since childhood to reinforce their understanding of biodiversity through experiential learning. He opined that more promotion such as through showing videos on the environment of Hong Kong would help the public understand the good work of the Government. Another Member added that there should be public education on the ecological benefits of tree planting, coral restoration, oyster farming etc. Mr Simon Chan said that there had been an existing platform on the Hong Kong Biodiversity Information Hub (HKBIH) where non-governmental organisations were engaged to organise educational and experiential learning programmes on biodiversity for the general public. He assured members that more educational efforts would continue be made.

20. Apart from a Member's suggestion on forming a strategic partnership with Ocean Park on public education on nature conservation and biodiversity, another Member also proposed the inclusion of marine parks and geoparks in the relevant educational package as they were valuable assets of Hong Kong. Echoing a Member above, another Member viewed that a nature history museum should be included in the updated BSAP for showcasing the unique local biodiversity which could also help promote tourism. The Member furthered that the numerous visiting centres set up under different projects could as well serve the purpose of a small museum to disseminate nature conservation messages. He opined that proper documentation on Hong Kong's efforts in nature conservation was an essential element to be included in the nature history museum and visiting centres, so that the public could build a sense of ownership and appreciate the biodiversity of the city. Mr Simon CHAN remarked that AFCD would explore setting up a local nature history museum.

21. A Member opined that foundation education on nature conservation and biodiversity should be arranged in a systematic manner with proper teaching materials and concrete examples provided to schools to support their teaching and arrangement of relevant activities. He considered that the new Primary Humanities Curriculum could serve relevant educational purposes as there would be coverage on topics concerning environmental education, climate change, national achievements in environmental protection etc. He suggested AFCD to work with EDB on the inclusion of relevant examples on Hong Kong in the curriculum. For secondary

school students, the Member shared that there was currently a Citizenship and Social Development course which involved a lot of experiential learning and projects under the DSE curriculum and AFCD could provide more in-depth guidance to encourage student participation in biodiversity and nature conservation initiatives. As for young children at kindergarten level, he said that activity-based education would be appropriate. He believed that solid work could be done through the aforesaid educational efforts. Acknowledging the importance of experiential learning, another Member suggested that more parent-child activities could be arranged. Mr Simon Chan said that AFCD would take Members' comments into consideration and step up educational efforts accordingly in the next phase of the BSAP.

22. Considering that global warming could increase the risk of hill fires, a Member proposed more education and publicity efforts for raising public awareness about hill fires especially during grave-sweeping season. He furthered that the Government could collaborate with companies on promoting greening and biodiversity through tree planting activities, and with charitable organisations on educating the public about proper animal release practices.

Deepening Mainstreaming

23. A Member was pleased with the progress in mainstreaming within the Government where departments such as the Architectural Services Department and the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) had placed high priority on biodiversity in their work considerations. He remarked that the Government had performed well in coping with the five major challenges in biodiversity conservation, namely the destruction of habitats, pollution, overfishing, the invasion of alien species and climate change. He encouraged AFCD to make continued efforts in the implementation of biodiversity initiatives by targeting those challenges.

24. A Member highlighted the importance of the concerted efforts of different stakeholders in biodiversity conservation and suggested that the Government should adopt a holistic approach in compiling the updated BSAP. With reference to another Member's written comments submitted before the meeting and a Member above's questions on the long-term mainstreaming plan and the application of green finance on biodiversity and nature conservation projects, Mr Simon Chan highlighted that the first phase of the BSAP had seen a great success in mainstreaming biodiversity within the Government, as demonstrated by the incorporation of biodiversity elements in various projects across works departments. Building on this success and the growing awareness of biodiversity in society, he said that mainstreaming efforts in the next phase of the BSAP would be expanded to cover various sectors, including business and finance. Mr Chan furthered that it was a global trend for enterprises to incorporate biodiversity into their work such as through the adoption of the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) framework.

25. A Member remarked that the Government should provide clear definition of nature-based solutions (NbS) as well as more relevant guidelines to facilitate their application in projects and to avoid green washing. As NbS was a relatively new concept, Mr Simon Chan indicated that the Government had been working with the sectors concerned on issuing relevant guidelines. For instance, CEDD, in collaboration with AFCD, was preparing a set of guidelines on NbS for the upcoming development of the Northern Metropolis whereas the Hong Kong Green Building Council was working on the inclusion of a new chapter on NbS in its Guidebook for Sustainable Built Environment in consultation with AFCD.

26. A Member shared that while the proceeds of green bonds under the Green Bond Framework of the Government Sustainable Bond Programme could be used to finance projects relevant to nature conservation and biodiversity, no proceeds in 2024 were used in such areas. The Member said that the Government should play a leading and demonstrative role in encouraging the utilisation of green capital in projects. Mr Simon Chan clarified that the Government Sustainable Bond Programme had already included “Nature Conservation/Biodiversity” as an eligible funding theme. He cited that the Tsui Ping River’s revitalisation project, which incorporated eco-friendly design elements, as an example, though it was not submitted under that specific theme. Mr Chan indicated that the Government would explore opportunities to fund more relevant projects through the Programme.

27. Pointing out that nature conservation and biodiversity were yet to be classified as an option of green economic activities in the Hong Kong Taxonomy for Sustainable Finance published by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), a Member opined that the Government could support green finance development in Hong Kong by exploring with HKMA the possibility of including additional eligible categories with reference to the green bond project catalogue released by the People's Bank of China in 2021. Acknowledging the importance of green finance in nature conservation work which was a global trend, Mr Simon Chan agreed that more work could be done on channelling investments, including through ESG initiatives, towards nature conservation and sustainable development.

Capacity Building

28. A Member was pleased to note the proposed direction of more collaboration with enterprises in the updated BSAP. With the global trend of reporting nature-related risks and opportunities by companies, in particular the listed companies, she shared that there were seven early adopters of TNFD including property developers and beverage production companies in Hong Kong. She pointed out that while the companies might have aspirations in incorporating nature and biodiversity conservation in their ESG policies, they might not have sufficient technical knowledge for the subsequent implementation. As such, she considered that capacity building and collaboration with enterprises were essential work for the next phase of the BSAP.

29. A Member said that a working group with the participation of representatives from both the academic and financial sectors should be established to explore how accurate data could be obtained on scope 3 carbon emissions for the relevant environmental reporting under ESG and TNFD.

Collaborative Partnering

30. Noting that the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) had been identified as one of the key strategic areas for enhanced biodiversity conservation in the NBSAP, a Member sought more details about the implementation plans and measures. Mr Simon Chan clarified that the NBSAP served as a steering document outlining priority actions to guide conservation efforts at a policy level. Those included developing mechanisms for strengthening biodiversity conservation, with a particular focus on fostering regional collaboration in key strategic areas. In line with such steer, he explained that the Government had been actively collaborating with counterparts in the Guangdong Province and Shenzhen to advance cross-boundary conservation efforts for wetlands, ecological corridors and marine life. He added that there would also be more collaborative efforts among GBA cities in combating illegal wildlife crime in the updated BSAP.

Internal Discussion Session (Closed-door session)

31. Sharing that many experts were keen to make contributions to nature and biodiversity conservation work in Hong Kong, a Member proposed that the Government could leverage on their expertise and resources by engaging more experts in public education and research studies. Mr Simon Chan indicated that a large number of experts had already been involved in compiling the first BSAP and the subsequent implementation work. For example, the Government had collaborated with the University of Hong Kong on building the databases of the HKBIH, and engaged local experts to devise the lists of threatened species.

32. At a Member's invitation, another Member shared with Members his company's ESG experience which had drawn reference from other examples such as Singapore, Chengdu and Shenzhen. He also highlighted the Science Park's efforts in its corporate social responsibility and ESG biodiversity landscape which could be a potential example for showcasing the biodiversity and nature conservation work of Hong Kong. The Member opined that the biodiversity achievements of Hong Kong could be an additional edge in its competition with the neighbouring cities. He suggested that the Government should strengthen its publicity efforts through different channels including visiting centres on Hong Kong's key achievements in nature conservation and biodiversity which could also be packaged for tourism attraction.

33. A Member said that the Government should allocate proper resources to support the updated BSAP in spite of the current financial constraints. Citing the nature history museum in Singapore as an example which was funded by private

donation and endowment funds, the Member held the view that AFCD should explore different funding possibilities for setting up a nature history museum and for other initiatives as and when appropriate. Another Member pointed out that blended finance had become a global trend in green finance where private funding could be diverted to close financial gaps. The Member suggested and another Member echoed that more relevant guidelines and examples should be provided to the commercial sectors as this could help avoid green washing in addition to encouraging investment on ecological conservation and climate change projects. One of the above Members added that the Government and charitable organisations could also take the lead to invest in such projects.

34. Mr Simon Chan thanked all Members for their invaluable comments which were all relevant to the updated BSAP. He assured that AFCD would take Members' comments into consideration in updating the BSAP.

35. The Chairman appreciated the constructive suggestions of Members. He noted that Members were appreciative of AFCD's efforts in the implementation of the first phase of the BSAP and encouraged AFCD to keep up the efforts and good work. The Chairman aspired that a more concrete proposal would be provided by the end of the year.

(The presentation team left the meeting at this juncture.)

Item 4 : Any other business (Closed-door session)

36. There was no other business for discussion at the meeting.

Item 5 : Date of next meeting (Closed-door session)

37. Members would be advised on the agenda in due course.

38. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

**ACE Secretariat
October 2025**