

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY SUB-COMMITTEE

Proposed Framework for the Public Engagement on the Management of Single-use Plastics

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposed framework for the public engagement ("PE") process on the management of single-use plastics.

Background

2. At the first meeting of the new term held on 22 April 2021, the Council for Sustainable Development ("SDC") endorsed the proposed topic and scope of the PE outlined in SDC Paper No. 02/21 entitled "Public Engagement on the Management of Single-use Plastics" (see **Appendix I**) and the role of the Strategy Sub-committee ("SSC").

3. The SDC also endorsed enhancement measures to the PE process at the same meeting. In particular, SSC will amalgamate the role of the former Support Group formed for the PE exercise and advise the SDC on the formulation of a Public Engagement Document ("PE Document"), the implementation of the public interaction phase of the PE, and the formulation of recommendations. The SDC may, having regard to the topic of the PE, appoint experts with relevant knowledge as co-opt members of SSC to provide necessary input and support. In this regard, we have appointed ten co-opt Members from the non-Government sector, together with 15 members of the SDC, to sit on the SSC under the leadership of SSC Chairman for carrying out the PE on the management of single-use plastics. A list of membership is at **Appendix II**.

4. At the SDC meeting on 22 April 2021, Members suggested keeping in view of the findings of the Sustainable Consumption Behaviour Study ("the Study") in order to grasp the consumers' attitude and behavior towards sustainable consumption before the launch of the new PE. The Study was conducted by the Consumer Council and funded by the Sustainable Development Fund. We understand from the Consumer Council that there was a moderate improvement in consumer awareness,

attitude, behavior and readiness towards sustainable consumption in 2020 as compared to 2015. In particular, consumers have concerned more on excessive packaging of products and more likely to avoid buying single-use items. While the Consumer Council plans to organise a conference to release the study findings in mid-June, a synopsis on those related to single-use or plastic products is prepared for advance reference at **Appendix III**.

Public engagement process under the charge of the SSC

5. Based on the deliberation of the SDC, the following objectives and framework of the PE are proposed. Through the PE, we hope to obtain the majority view on: (a) the need to phase out the use of single-use plastics; (b) a phased approach with either voluntary or regulatory measures for different types of single-use plastics; and (c) a timeline for the above phased approach.

(A) Objectives

6. The objectives of the PE on the management of single-use plastics include -

- (1) to **educate and inform** the public on the harmful impact of the excessive and indiscriminate use of single-use plastic items to the environment, marine life and health; and importance of reducing the use of single-use plastics through behavioral changes as well as proper management through regulatory or voluntary instruments.
- (2) to **engage the public to solicit their views** on key issues relating to the management of single-use plastics –
 - (a) types/categories of single-use plastic items (other than plastic beverage bottles and single-use dining ware, which are being / will be handled separately by the Government) that should be tackled/controlled or exempted, based on a range of considerations, and the priority concerned. The public should be informed of relevant measures adopted by other jurisdictions for reference;
 - (b) the approaches (regulatory vs voluntary) to be adopted for managing different types/categories of single-use plastic items, having regard to a range of factors including

availability of alternatives and impact on the community, etc;

- (c) further enhancement of the regulatory measure of Plastic Shopping Bag (PSB) Charging Scheme;
 - (d) the timeline for implementing the management/control measures; and
 - (e) consumers' considerations when choosing "greener merchandise".
- (3) to take the opportunity to **further promote green lifestyle**; and
 - (4) to enable the SDC to report to the Government with **feasible and practical recommendations** in managing single-use plastics.

(B) Framework of the public engagement

(1) Focus group meetings

To facilitate in-depth stakeholder discussions and widen the horizon of views to be taken into account in the preparation of the PE Document, around three focus group meetings (FGMs) will be conducted. FGMs will intensively engage the retail and wholesale; food outlets and pre-packaged food sector; delivery, logistics and e-commerce; hospitality; medical and health care; and other sectors such as green groups, non-governmental organisations, education sector and public authorities.

(a) Target groups

- **Retail and wholesale** – possible targets may include department stores and retail sectors (e.g. key trade associations like the Hong Kong Retail Management Association), seasoning, sauce and condiment production sectors and grocery stores.
- **Food outlets and pre-packaged food sector** – possible targets may include supermarkets, convenience stores, bakeries, wet markets and pre-packaged food sector.

- **Delivery, logistics, e-commerce** – possible targets may include delivery services for online shopping, manufacturing and distribution sectors, marketing sector, logistics sector, e-commerce sector.
- **Hospitality** – possible targets may include recreation, lodging (e.g. Hong Kong Hotels Association), convention, entertainment and culture sectors as well as property management sector.
- **Medical and health care** – possible targets may include the Department of Health, Hospital Authority, private hospitals, elderly care centres, health care and hygiene sectors (including household cleaning, personal hygiene and cosmetic products) and Chinese medicine sector.
- **Others** – possible targets may include **green groups, community groups and non-governmental organisations, academics and education sector, and public authorities.**

(b) **Issues to be discussed**

In addition to the general issues set out under (A)(2) above, key stakeholders from the above target groups would be invited to provide views based on their business model or any observation from their day-to-day operation, examples may include -

- Challenges in reducing single-use plastics taking into account their business operations and any major concerns
- Initiatives taken or plans to reduce single-use plastics in their business operations
- Sustainable single-use plastic alternatives available in the market and cost implications
- From business operation point of view, which single-use plastic item can be tackled or controlled first?
- How can the current PSB Charging Scheme be enhanced?

(2) **Public interaction activities**

A series of **public interaction activities** are proposed to be organised during the public interaction phase with the assistance of the Programme Director –

- (a) launching the PE with a **press conference** to draw the attention of media and general public and encourage them to offer views on the issues;
- (b) **regional forums** will be conducted to facilitate **intensive ideas exchange** of the general public and key stakeholders;
- (c) **briefing sessions** will be conducted to consult a variety of **stakeholders**, including the relevant industry players such as chambers of commerce and the corresponding trade associations, relevant government advisory bodies and committees, District Area Committees as well as green groups and the youth, etc.; and
- (d) secondary school visits combined with interactive drama performances, PowerPoint presentations, and Q&As sessions will be conducted to arouse students' interest.

(3) **Randomised telephone survey**

A randomised telephone survey is proposed to be conducted to understand the general public's views on their basic understanding on the issue and their willingness to contribute in reducing the usage of the single-use plastics. We shall engage a contractor for conducting a telephone survey upon the launch of the PE with a target of at least 1 000 persons being successfully interviewed through mobile phone numbers.

(4) **Views Collection Form (VCF)**

A questionnaire comprising of mainly closed-ended questions in simple language will be devised to collect views on different aspects concerning both the general and specific issues for quantitative analysis.

(5) **Dedicated Website**

A dedicated website will be launched to mainly provide –

- (a) core information of the PE and the PE Document for downloading, etc.;
- (b) online VCF and other written views submission platform;
- (c) schedule of the public interaction activities; and
- (d) data processing function to collect quantitative views of the VCF for analysis by the Programme Director

Proposed public education and awareness programmes

7. Other publicity activities include producing TV and Radio Announcements in the Public Interest. In addition to traditional promotion channels, we will make use of social media (e.g. Big Waster’s Facebook) to promote the PE. We shall also explore to conduct other publicity activities, e.g. interview with the general public about their use of single-use plastics in daily life, awareness campaign or game challenge by Key Opinion Leader to promote green lifestyle, which will be uploaded to the aforementioned dedicated website, as well as Facebook and Instagram of Big Waster for more exposure. Advertisements will be placed in the newspapers and their online and mobile platforms and posters will be displayed at different locations as appropriate.

Way forward

8. Hong Kong Productivity Council has been appointed as the Programme Director, it will kick start preparation works for organising FGMs with key stakeholders invited to give their initial views on the overall direction of the PE and suggestions on possible areas for public discussion. Meanwhile, we are arranging the appointments of a public relations agency and other contractors for the PE.

9. Regarding the timeframe, we aim to formally release the PE Document and launch the 3-month public interaction phase in September 2021. Regional forums, briefing sessions, school visits and other promotional activities will be held after the launch.

**Secretariat
Council for Sustainable Development
June 2021**