Dear Sir/Madam,

Views on Hong Kong combating climate change

WWF-Hong Kong

Over 190 Countries from around the world reached a historic agreement at COP21 in Paris in December 2015 to combat climate change committing to actions, ‘Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels.’ The challenge to achieve sufficient reductions in carbon emissions will be won or lost in the actions taken now and over the coming decade in the cities around the world. The Hong Kong Government, understanding the urgency of the situation, needs to set new and clear carbon emission reduction targets to 2030, showing decisive leadership in a comprehensive plan for our city, so as to fulfill the obligation of our community in combating climate change.

However, the current procedure of gathering views from members of public doesn’t match the importance of climate change. In fact we could only find a small reference on governments’ website inviting public comment, with no public consultation document and no efforts to promote this. Climate change policy affects all walks of life. WWF believes a formal public consultation should be held to gather public opinion systematically, and that therefore the current deadline for consultation should be extended. And the public deserves to be well-informed in making a long term commitment on combating climate change. The engagement process of ‘Climate Ready’ from the government so far fails to fulfill the aspirations of the community to be involved in the process of formulating plans.

Here are the suggestions from WWF-Hong Kong.

1. Reduction Targets to 2030 – 40% carbon emission reduction

The current carbon reduction targets set by the HKSAR Government is 19% by 2020, with 2005 taken as the baseline. This is simply not enough to hold the increase in the
global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels. Therefore, it now falls to the HKSAR Government to set a more ambitious target, one that meets the obligations of COP21 and sets a target for 2030. WWF-Hong Kong now urges the government to adopt a 40% absolute carbon reduction target by 2030. Combined with the “Hong Kong 2030+” land use planning policy, Hong Kong can then progress our City to a sustainable, low carbon development approach.

2. Renewable Energy Development – the time is now

The obligations of COP21 require a 40% absolute reduction target, which can only be achieved by the implementation of both Energy efficiency measures and Renewable energy development. The mindset needed is to recognize the maturity of proven renewable technologies and that implementation is possible in cities across the world. The green jobs and economic benefits to the community from the renewable energy market are here for the taking and Hong Kong should not trail other cities in the Region and across the world. The first step in starting renewable energy development in our City is to allow market entry for individuals and corporates. The HKSAR government should as a priority introduce a ‘Feed-in Tariff’ during the Scheme of Control Agreement review to be completed by 2018. The introduction of Feed-in Tariff should then be able to provide a reasonable return to different investors in distributed renewable energy and enable individuals and corporates to benefit from this new market and play their part in reducing emissions and building our city’s capacity to quickly deploy renewables.

Besides distributed renewable power generation by individuals and in corporate premises, the Hong Kong government should now consider more productive use of land resources that are lying idle, harnessing the opportunity of renewable energy generation on existing and future city infrastructure, community and government facilities, e.g. adopt development of larger scale renewable PV solar energy projects on our city reservoirs, roadways and both PV solar and wind turbines on outer islands. The government needs to focus on renewable energy through readily available PV solar solutions and have clear plans for offshore wind farms as soon as possible, without causing detriment to the local biodiversity or encroachment on protected areas.

3. Investment in Energy Efficiency – time to catch up

Hong Kong is currently lagging well behind other similar world class cities in terms of mindset for and investment in energy efficiency (EE). A recent WWF study finds that when comparing the % of EE investment over electricity revenues between Hong Kong and all 54 states and territories in the US, Hong Kong ranks way below others scoring a lower 0.04%, which is almost at the same as Alaska, Puerto Rico, Guam, Virgin Islands and way below leading states of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Vermont that score over 5%. It shows Hong Kong needs to seriously reconsider its approach and look to immediate EE investment to raise our performance of energy efficiency. Eventually with
the investment, Hong Kong should be able to achieve the annual 1% to 2% energy efficiency improvement target, which WWF has been advocating.

4. Our Biodiversity – it must be protected

Hong Kong has a rich biodiversity that the community as a whole wishes to protect and allow to recover and flourish. We know the ability and capacity of various species to adapt to climate change is very different. Therefore, the community expectation is for the Hong Kong Government to take responsibility to be fully aware of and study the impact of climate change to the local flora and fauna species and take action to secure our territory biodiversity, particular attention is needed to those areas of high ecological value. For example the wetlands in the Mai Po Inner Deep Bay area, the southwest waters off Lantau, our country parks and other conservation zones. Our cities biodiversity must be protected by an approach of conserve first and planned careful development to enable a future where people and nature can live in harmony. In a city like Hong Kong, an approach to development and energy planning with a clear set of action plans to realise a balanced approach of strategies, can assure a balanced ‘Urban Green’. WWF Hong Kong believes there is no time to waste and that as matter of urgency the community must now work together to do everything possible to Transform Hong Kong into Asia’s Most Sustainable City.

5. Participation of business and community – Together Possible

Hong Kong’s low carbon transition requires active participation of business and community. The Hong Kong government should introduce measures to encourage business leaders to examine the current footprint created by their business operations, innovate and re-engineer their businesses to become or close to net-zero carbon. Involvement of the community and employees is vital to accelerate the transition to a sustainable climate resilient circular economy.

6. Integrate ‘One Planet low carbon living’ into education in Schools and develop Youth Conservation leaders

In 2013, UNESCO endorsed *Global Action Programme (GAP) of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The GAP generates and scales up the concrete actions for ESD through “integrating sustainable development into education and integrating education into sustainable development”. Many **overseas examples have proven that the whole institutional approach, which inculcates ‘One planet low carbon living’ into formal and non-formal curriculum, campus management, culture leveraging youth empowerment and associated community of the institution, is most effective to develop city populations to adopt sustainable lifestyle and consumption practices. For instance, **One Planet School initiative in UK has been crucial to prepare young people to act as drivers for sustainability in their communities in the future. Education on carbon
emissions, climate change and low carbon living prepares our younger for low carbon living, green jobs and a green economy.

The whole institutional approach for sustainability education is suitable for Hong Kong and founded on the principles espoused by UNESCO. Our institutes and schools, as communities, as well as community youth groups can showcase their adoption of sustainability. We support mainstreaming ESD into local education policy; integrating key low carbon living principles into all aspects of education campus and procurement supply chains, moving from green initiatives to an accredited low carbon audit such as that offered by WWF-Hong Kong’s Low Carbon Office Operations Programme and Low Carbon Manufacturing Programme; increasing the capacity of educators and trainers to deliver ESD more effectively; empowering and mobilizing youth groups to be aware and involved in low carbon living; and accelerating sustainable solutions at local level.

The Hong Kong Government can play a key role in taking lead to integrate whole institutional approach in education sector to bring one planet living into practices.

Remarks:
WWF-Hong Kong gathered views from the public during the same period of time through Facebook and on the street. We attached the links of the Facebook post and the PDF file of over 1500 citizens’ point of view with this email for your reference.

Facebook post for solar PV development:
https://www.facebook.com/wwfhongkong/photos/a.382481556891.167413.7847926891/10153723969821892/?type=3&theater

Facebook post for 2030 carbon reduction target:
https://www.facebook.com/wwfhongkong/photos/a.382481556891.167413.7847926891/10153714355251892/?type=3&theater

We look forward to your response, and to seeing a bold climate action plan for Hong Kong being adopted.

Sincerely,

Gavin Edwards
Director, Conservation
WWF Hong Kong