

GREENS SEEK COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO NATURE CONSERVATION
Asia's World City deserves a world class conservation policy

Hong Kong (3 December 2004) An alliance of Hong Kong's leading green groups today reacted with caution to the Government's new Nature Conservation Policy (NCP). They outlined their concerns that it falls short of global standards set by the Rio Declaration and expressed disappointment at the lack of financial support for nature conservation.

"The Government's long-awaited NCP starts to address some of Hong Kong's pressing conservation issues, but it does not go far enough", said Mei Ng of the Friends of the Earth. "It's a start, but the NCP is incomplete."

The NCP wholly neglects many areas that a comprehensive nature conservation policy should cover, including:

- marine conservation
- sustainable resource management
- conservation of threatened genetic and species diversity
- trade in live wildlife (particularly birds) and marine products
- commitment to the principle of "no net loss" of biodiversity.

In addition, no new financial resources have been committed to conservation by the NCP. Although the NCP sets out praiseworthy objectives, it does not articulate strategies, plans or targets to realise these objectives. The alliance offers its assistance to the Government in developing a biodiversity action plan for Hong Kong.

Despite these reservations, the alliance welcomes the Government's focus on ecologically-important sites under private ownership, and its efforts to tackle this problem through the Management Agreement and Private-Public Partnership (PPP) mechanisms.

"The 12 privately-owned ecologically sensitive sites identified by the NCP are the 'Crown Jewels' of Hong Kong's natural heritage" said Albert Lai of the Conservancy Association. "Some of these sites are particularly ecologically sensitive: when considering PPP proposals, we welcome the Government's willingness to consider non *in-situ* land exchange for such sites on a case-by-case basis. In seeking to conserve

these sites, there must not be the *a priori* assumption that their preservation must go hand-in-hand with a development. All PPP proposals must be open to public scrutiny and be evaluated against strict conservation criteria.”

The alliance welcomes the pilot scheme for Management Agreements to encourage conservation management by NGOs on privately-owned land. However, it regrets that the Government has not made available any new financial resources but has transferred a mere HK\$5 million from the existing Environment Conservation Fund to this scheme. This is clearly insufficient and demonstrates the low priority given to conservation by Government.

“The Government must demonstrate its political will and provide adequate resources for the protection of our natural resources. We support the establishment of a ‘Conservation Trust’ for Hong Kong, funded by both the public and private sectors. We hope that the success of the Management Agreement and PPP schemes will encourage the establishment of such a Trust,” said Dr Alan Leung of WWF Hong Kong.

“Conservation is not a luxury, but is a key component of sustainable development on which our quality of life and ultimate survival depend. The NCP is a step in the right direction, but we are still waiting for a comprehensive conservation policy for Hong Kong,” said Dr Ng Cho Nam of the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society.

Business Environment Council (Tel. No.: 2784 3934)
Conservancy Association (Tel. No.: 2728 6800)
Friends of the Earth (Hong Kong) (Tel. No.: 2528 5588)
Green Lantau Association (Tel. No.: 2985 5099)
Green Power (Tel. No.: 2314 2662)
The Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (Tel. No.:)
Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (Tel.: 2483 9534)
WWF Hong Kong (Tel. No.: 2526 1011)