

Findings of the Sustainable Development Strategy Engagement Process



13 December 2004

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Sustainable development is commonly defined as: ‘development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs¹’. Hong Kong, as a modern and dynamic city, recognises the need to adopt sustainable development (SD) principles to maintain our prosperity and to safeguard the future for coming generations. The building of an SD strategy through a process of community engagement is an important part of this aim.
- 1.2 This document presents the initial proposals of the Council for SD for Hong Kong’s SD strategy based on the outcomes of a stakeholder-led engagement exercise.
- 1.3 The document is organised into the following sections -
- Background
 - Process
 - Findings
 - Principles

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council for SD was appointed by the Chief Executive on 1 March 2003. One of the terms of reference of the Council is: ‘to advise on the preparation of a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong that will integrate economic, social and environmental perspectives.’
- 2.2 In November 2003, the Council convened a workshop, where it invited stakeholders from various sectors to consider how to take this task forward, with particular emphasis on involving the community in building an SD strategy.
- 2.3 On the advice of stakeholders, the Council agreed that for the initial stage of strategy building, a five stage “engagement process” should be implemented, as follows -
- (i) Identifying Pilot Areas for the initial stage of the strategy
 - (ii) Preparing a document to invite responses
 - (iii) Directly involving the wider community
 - (iv) Reporting on the community response
 - (v) The Government to publish a strategy document
- 2.4 In December 2003, the Council for SD identified three Pilot Areas, namely: **Solid Waste Management (SWM), Renewable Energy (RE) and Urban Living Space (ULS)**. When selecting these areas, Council members noted that for future rounds of the

¹ ‘Our Common Future’ (1987) United Nations

engagement process, there should be an effective arrangement for collecting direct community input into the selection of new Priority Areas.



Renewable Energy



Solid Waste Management



Urban Living Space

- 2.5 In order to widen the ownership of the process, the Council formed three Support Groups to steer the Pilot Areas. The Support Group Convenors are non-Government members of the Council or its Strategy Sub-committee, and the groups include stakeholders from various sectors, as well as government officials.
- 2.6 Based on the work of the Support Groups, the Council for SD prepared an “Invitation and Response” (IR) document to provide background information on the three Pilot Areas and to pose key questions relevant to Hong Kong’s sustainability. On 15 July 2004, the Council launched the IR document: *Sustainable Development – Making Choices for Our Future*, marking the start of a period of community engagement in discussion of the SD Strategy.

3. PROCESS

- 3.1 On 17 July 2004, the Council for SD hosted an initial Strategy Forum to give stakeholders an early opportunity to respond to the IR document. Further public forums on each of the Pilot Areas provided for more focused discussion and, between October and November 2004, the Council organised 11 facilitated workshops to gather further views.
- 3.2 The Council also sought public feedback through the following channels -
 - A dedicated interactive website (www.susdev.org.hk) that provided further information and allowed the public to discuss the Pilot Areas

Stakeholder Engagement Findings

- A public exhibition on SD and the Pilot Areas that toured popular public venues in Hong Kong
- IR leaflets with simple questionnaires, distributed at various public locations together with SD Strategy “wishing wells”, into which people could place completed questionnaires.



Public Exhibition at Revenue Tower, Wanchai

- 3.3 Over 17,000 copies of the IR document and 32,000 IR leaflets were distributed to the public. More than one thousand stakeholders and stakeholder groups responded to the IR document, either on specific Pilot Areas or on the process in general.
- 3.4 Participating stakeholders included representatives of NGOs, Government, Chambers of Commerce and other businesses; and individuals in their many capacities as consumers, students, teachers, workers, experts and concerned citizens. Throughout the course of the programme, the Council Secretariat prepared reports and updates on these activities, and posted these on the SD Strategy website.
- 3.5 Statistics on the engagement exercise are shown below

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of written responses submitted through email/mail • Number of completed IR document questionnaires • Number of written responses posted on the website • Number of attendees at forums and workshops • Number of visitors to roving exhibition • Number of IR documents issued 	<p>more than 250</p> <p>more than 1,000</p> <p>more than 600</p> <p>more than 800</p> <p>more than 22,000</p> <p>more than 17,000</p>
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Summary of Statistics

The responses are summarised in the following sections. Further details are available on the SD website where full reports are posted.

4. SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

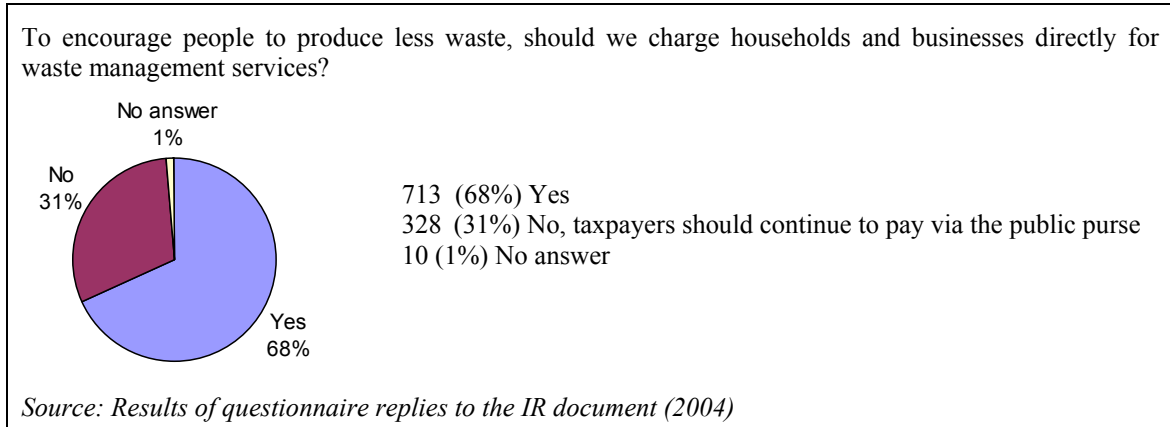
1) An urgent need to find alternatives to landfills

- 4.1 Stakeholders argue that landfill facilities are a non-sustainable and temporary measure and that longer-term alternative solutions should be considered. A policy and strategy for Hong Kong that covers waste reduction, promotion of reuse & recycling and effective waste treatment is needed when implementing measures such as waste charging and thermal treatment.
- 4.2 During the workshops, most stakeholders agreed that Hong Kong should adopt a four-tier waste management strategy: (1) to reduce waste at source, (2) to recover and recycle, (3) to reduce the volume of waste and (4) only to dispose of waste at landfills as a last resort. Public education was highlighted as an important factor to promote this strategy.
- 4.3 Some stakeholders wrote in to suggest providing small recycling bins for home use, mandatory waste separation and provision of adequate collection points with conspicuous recycling bins to encourage waste separation at source. A few stakeholders suggested that there should be a progressive landfill ban for products that can be recycled to encourage waste separation and recycling.
- 4.4 Stakeholders also wrote in to advocate publicity and education campaigns to focus on waste avoidance, reduction and recycling. Others stressed that the campaign should link with waste charging policies to ensure effectiveness. Government and corporations could take the lead by implementing waste reduction and green purchasing measures to help change the public mind-set.

2) Charging for waste management services as an incentive to reduce waste generation

- 4.5 There was support for waste charges based on the ‘user pays’ principle, with some agreeing that households should pay, whilst others felt that the responsibility lay with business users and producers. Stakeholders felt that the Government should be clear when allocating subsidies and incentives (as well as charges), as to whom these should apply. The overall aim of waste charges should be to reduce waste, not to provide source of revenue for Government. Further, lower income groups such as poor households should not be unduly penalized by waste charges.
- 4.6 Some stakeholders felt that, no matter whether the Government introduced direct user charges on households or business, this should be based on the amount of waste produced. Opinions were divided on how to distinguish between charging the different types of waste from households and businesses but it was agreed that efforts to reduce waste should be rewarded with lower charges.

- 4.7 Further written comments concerned whether waste charges should be according to volume or weight, on a “pay-per-bag” basis, or an initial flat rate. Some stakeholders suggested a progressive charging scheme, whilst others suggested charging business only initially and according to trade. Other comments concerned the charging of visitors to Hong Kong for waste as well.



3) Producers have a responsibility to reduce waste

- 4.8 In the workshops, most stakeholders agreed that Hong Kong should adopt producer responsibility schemes (PRS) and other financial charges or incentives with legislative support.
- 4.9 Such schemes could involve charging producers directly under the ‘polluter pays’ principle, although concerns was raised as to the resources needed for enforcement and the possibility of producers shifting the financial burden of compliance onto consumers.
- 4.10 Some stakeholders wrote in suggesting that packaging standards (for recyclable materials) be imposed whilst others felt that it should be left to industry to work out how to achieve the targets and requirements set by Government. Standardisation of materials for packaging was seen as a way to facilitate reuse and recycling.

4) Creating a market for recycled goods would reduce waste

- 4.11 Stakeholders identified the need for better waste separation at source and the need for incentives and penalties (charges) to encourage the public to recycle and to stimulate the market environment for the recycling industry. Higher recyclability in products, regulating the recycling industry to promote safety and environmental standards and controlling the import of recyclables could contribute in this regard.
- 4.12 Respondents considered that there should be no direct subsidy to recycling industries but that Government could provide incentives, e.g., allocating land for waste collection and recycling. In addition, stakeholders felt that promotion, education and ‘green’ purchasing

guidelines were needed. Some suggested better marketing of locally recycled products and the possibility of cooperating with the Mainland to develop the recycling industry.

5) Use of advanced technology to reduce waste

- 4.13 At the workshops, stakeholders identified the need for alternative waste treatment technologies to reduce the volumes of waste disposed of in landfills. However, it was recognized that health and safety were prime considerations in the selection of new technology, especially thermal treatment or incineration.
- 4.14 Stakeholders who supported thermal treatment on the grounds that this would greatly reduce waste volume stated that the Government should use advanced technology, regularly monitor emissions and identify a range of options for locating treatment facilities. It was further suggested that any new thermal plants could be located close to current landfills.
- 4.15 Some written comments suggested that any thermal treatment plants should be integrated facilities with waste separation, proper monitoring of operating conditions and sophisticated emission controls. Cost and environmental impact were the two chief concerns relating to thermal treatment and many stakeholders felt that thermal treatment should only be a last resort due to the risks involved.
- 4.16 Stakeholders also mentioned composting as an appropriate waste management technology for processing food waste and using the compost for community gardens and greening. Some stakeholders noted that composting plants require a substantial area and there may be a lack of local demand for compost products.

6) Setting up a waste authority

- 4.17 Workshop participants generally supported a review of the institutional framework for waste management with a view to setting up a new authority with its own administrative and legal mandates. Apart from regulating the recycling and treatment industries, this authority could plan waste management, propose laws and guidelines, implement waste measures, enforce the law and address the apparent lack of coordination amongst Government Departments. The authority would need to be transparent and accountable and should enable all parties involved to pursue common goals.
- 4.18 Others suggested that an interdepartmental task force should be set up instead to improve coordination. It was also stressed that any new institutional framework should not create new high-ranking jobs but should re-deploy existing resources.

Summary of Views

- Throughout the engagement process, most respondents have commented on the urgency of finding alternatives to the disposing of municipal solid waste in landfills.
- Stakeholders generally agree on the need to promote waste reduction and recovery through a combination of public education, charges and incentives, all of which need to be underpinned by legislation. Forms of waste treatment such as thermal treatment could be considered, provided that adequate health and safety measures were in place.
- As for institutional arrangements, stakeholders indicated a preference for a single authority for waste management in Hong Kong.

5. RENEWABLE ENERGY (RE)

1) Hong Kong's policy on RE

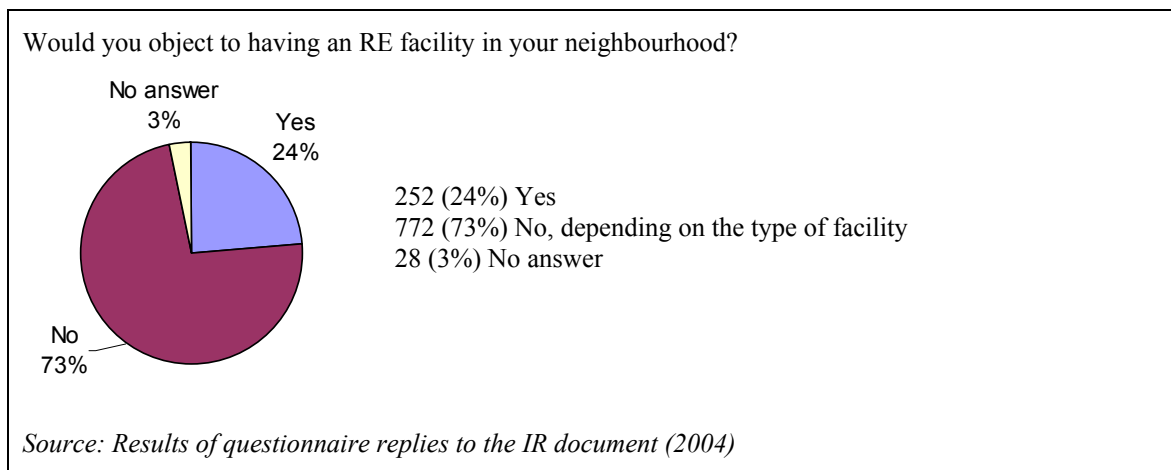
- 5.1 Most written comments supported RE development in Hong Kong, and some respondents felt that the Government should formulate a sustainable energy policy for HK that included a strategy for RE. Views were mixed on the level of targets to be set for RE, with some supporting incremental change whilst others wanted more radical targets.
- 5.2 In the workshops, stakeholders acknowledged the space limitations in Hong Kong and suggested that an RE strategy should include identifying sites in the Pearl River Delta for RE facilities importing “clean energy” from the Mainland. Workshop participants also felt that the Government should promote RE by opening the electricity market to suppliers, providing easy access to the grid, offering incentives to RE generators and users, installing RE facilities at Government sites and providing land for RE facilities. Stakeholders further suggested that the Government set up a fund to carry out research into RE, especially on its true cost in relation to fossil fuel.

2) Implementation

- 5.3 Written views from stakeholders were divided on whether RE facilities should be located in areas such as country parks, other countryside areas or in coast waters. Some suggested that energy-from-waste plants could to be located near existing landfills, although no harmful emissions or other forms of environmental damage should result from this.

Integrating RE installations in urban planning and building design (e.g., small wind turbines or solar panels) was mentioned.

- 5.4 Written comments suggested that further research on RE (with support from Government or the private sector) should be carried out, not just on technical matters, but also on social and economic impacts. Some suggested that the power companies should bear initial research and development costs for RE, which could be recovered on a phased basis under the Scheme of Control Agreement.
- 5.5 During the workshops, stakeholders indicated that wind power facilities could be built in country parks or coastal areas provided the sites were carefully chosen and designed and the community kept informed. Some stakeholders suggested that incentives should be offered to install solar power facilities on buildings, whilst others stated that regulations should be put in place making it mandatory for all new and some existing high-rise buildings to have solar installations.



- 5.6 Many stakeholders in the workshops supported the generation of energy from waste, on condition that the air quality did not deteriorate as a result of emissions from such facilities. Some suggested the inclusion of landfill gas as an RE source. Other stakeholders stated that energy from waste should not be included as RE or were not in favour of energy from waste.

3) Developing a market for RE

- 5.7 Many respondents commented that allowing easy access to the main power grid for RE providers would bring in new suppliers and possibly reduces costs, and some suggested tackling this during the coming review of the Scheme of Control Agreement between the Government and the power companies. Others cautioned that related changes should avoid cross subsidy or overcharging of consumers.

4) Paying for RE

- 5.8 Stakeholders held divided views on how to meet the likely higher initial financial cost of RE. Some suggested that the cost should be borne by the Government, some supported the “user-pays” principle and others supported wholly private sector funding. Several respondents felt that the power companies should accept lower profit margins to absorb part of the cost of RE. Some stakeholders cited factors such as the lack of cost-effective technology and the cost of locating RE facilities, and felt that RE should be introduced only when economically practical.
- 5.9 In the workshops, many stakeholders considered that consumers should be prepared to shoulder the short-term burden of paying extra for RE if this was more expensive than generating energy from fossil fuels. Some noted that low- income groups should not be affected by any increases in electricity prices for RE.

5) The electricity companies should promote RE by incorporating it in their fuel mix

- 5.10 Stakeholders at the workshops said that the electricity companies should do more to promote RE. Many felt that the electricity companies should set targets and a timetable for RE generation as a percentage of their fuel mix.

6) Enhanced public education on RE and energy conservation

- 5.11 Written comments from stakeholders indicated that education was important and that energy conservation and efficiency should be part of any RE education programme. This point was reinforced in the workshops. More demonstration and pilot projects should be implemented to encourage acceptance of RE, and public education on energy conservation and efficiency should be part of an overall sustainable energy strategy.

Summary of Views

- Stakeholders acknowledge the need to reduce Hong Kong's dependence on fossil fuels and address climate change by adopting RE.
- At the same time, stakeholders are concerned about the affordability of RE and suggest a phased-in approach for implementing RE.
- Respondents recognise the role of the electricity companies in RE promotion, the possibility of using locating RE facilities on the Mainland and the need to promote the RE market.
- More information on RE should also be made available; energy conservation and efficiency should be part of a sustainable energy strategy.

6. URBAN LIVING SPACE

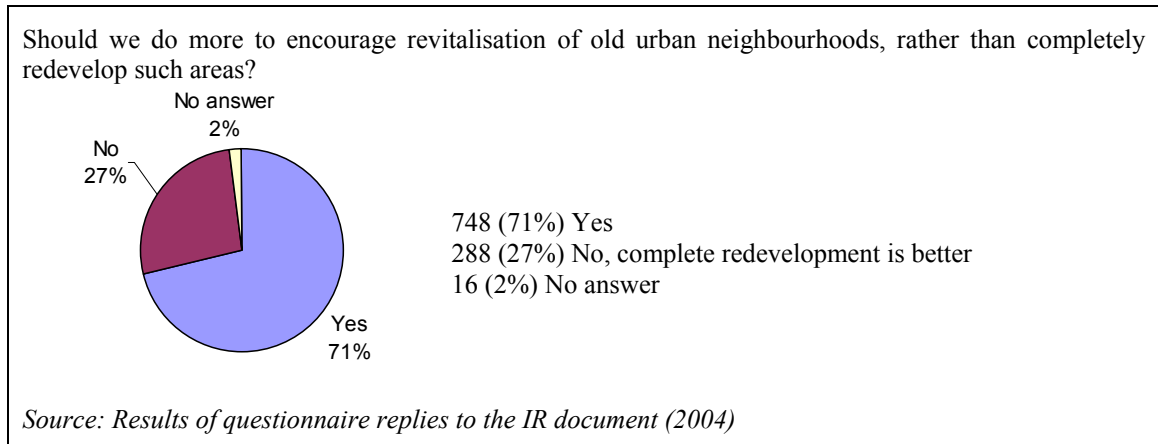
1) Better coordination of use of land resources is needed

- 6.1 Stakeholders wrote in commenting that better coordination was needed when developing land resources. Many stakeholders expressed a wish to conserve the characteristics of both the rural areas and the older built urban environments as far as possible to maintain Hong Kong's heritage and diversity.
- 6.2 In the workshops, stakeholders argued that the planning of new facilities and infrastructure should have due regard to the needs of the local communities. The Government should work closely with private developers and other agencies with the aim of improving the quality of urban living space in Hong Kong, and there should be more communication between Government and local residents. Some stakeholders commented that the town planning process should be more transparent.

2) Urban improvement and revitalization

- 6.3 Written comments further suggested that more open, community space, accessible green areas and better pedestrian environments were necessary to improve living space in urban areas. Older buildings and infrastructure that were still in good repair should be preserved to maintain the character and cultural value of existing urban neighbourhoods. One of the key aims of urban renewal should be to reduce congestion by mitigating traffic impact and improving environmental conditions.
- 6.4 In the workshops, stakeholders felt that full-scale demolition and redevelopment of old areas should only be carried out if it could be explicitly justified in sustainable

development terms. The Government should encourage refurbishment and renovation as a preferred option. Stakeholders further suggested design guidelines for allowable open green space in new redevelopments. Some also commented on the need to keep neighbourhood communities intact as far as possible during the process of urban renewal to maintain social cohesion.



- 6.5 Workshop participants felt that the economic value of redevelopment projects could be enhanced through better facilities for pedestrians and more street level retail outlets. Stakeholders were concerned about the erosion of civic values if the focus of urban re-development was short-term financial gain.
- 6.6 Many respondents recognised that, although revitalisation was preferable to redevelopment, in some cases full redevelopment of run-down urban areas might be necessary. Others suggested that public money should be used as seed money or loans for revitalisation. The involvement of residents in revitalisation decisions was seen as a key element in contributing to a neighbourhood’s sustainability.

3) New Territories or urban development

- 6.7 Stakeholders indicated in written comments that most new development should be carried out in the NT, with the necessary infrastructure and facilities provided on a timely basis to new communities. Several people suggested expanding NT development along railway routes with high-rise developments close to the railway lines. Job opportunities should also be created in the NT to attract young people to move there, which would balance the demographics of the population and, at the same time, reduce commuting stress.
- 6.8 Respondents had diverse views on how the NT areas might be developed to maximise land resources. Most favoured an approach that would allow for mixed types of development while preserving rural characteristics. Some written views argued for high-rise development in and around the new towns with lower- and mid-rise development elsewhere to provide a choice of housing types and densities. Others wrote opposing the

small house policy and noting that widespread low-density development was not sustainable in Hong Kong, given the scarcity of land. Underground development was also cited as a possibility.

- 6.9 In the workshops, stakeholders reinforced the point that that commercial and employment opportunities should be promoted in the NT to improve the quality of life there. Although divided on whether high-rise or medium rise buildings were preferred, stakeholders agreed that the provision of good transport links, schools and recreational and cultural venues are important if people were to have a good quality of living space in the NT. Obsolete industrial areas and land near the Closed Area were possible locations for NT development. Stakeholders suggested that the Government locate more of its offices in the NT.
- 6.10 Also in the workshops, stakeholders indicated that for better coordination of urban planning and transport links could be achieved by placing the two respective policy issues under a single Bureau.

4) Sustainable urban design

- 6.11 Stakeholders' written comments suggested that mandatory maintenance of buildings by owners was needed to complement sustainable urban design in improving the look of the city. Other measures that could improve the urban environment included: restrictions on development heights, implementation of strict guidelines on view corridors and "breezeways" and the timely implementation of planned open space projects. These points were reinforced in the workshops, where participants supported guidelines on sustainable building design, provision of green spaces, visual impact and development density.

5) Related policy issues

- 6.12 Respondents commented that more collaboration between the Government, the Urban Renewal Authority, NGOs, and local communities would lead to better planning. Population growth would also affect decisions on whether to revitalise or redevelop certain areas. Stakeholders noted the importance of long-term visions like HK 2030, but felt that these should not create a mindset that implementation is decades away. In the workshops, stakeholders noted that Mainland China was considered to be an attractive option for many local residents, adding that Hong Kong residents, especially the elderly, would move there if facilities such as education and medical services improved. Urban design also needed to take into account the influx of visitors from the Mainland.

Summary of Views

- Stakeholders felt that the quality of Hong Kong’s urban living space would be improved by reducing congestion in urban areas through the creation of more open space and public areas during urban renewal, and by the concentration of future development in the NT.
- While agreeing on the potential for more development in the NT, respondents stressed that a mix of development types and improvement to transport and community facilities were necessary. In addition, rural characteristics should not be unduly compromised by new development.
- For urban renewal, in principle revitalisation was preferred to redevelopment, and the importance of preserving the social characteristics and heritage of urban communities was emphasised.
- Sustainable building design, in particular through appropriate building heights, providing space between buildings and creating “green” features would enhance the quality of life in the urban area.

7. EMERGING PRINCIPLES

7.1 Based on the views of stakeholders, the following emerging principles for the three Pilot Areas. Targets have been identified.

Solid Waste Management

7.2 Total municipal solid waste generated should be reduced by taking the following measures at source: waste avoidance, recycling, using fewer materials, green purchasing and the use of charges and incentives.

7.3 Legislation should be considered to implement producer responsibility schemes (PRS) in Hong Kong in order to help reduce waste at source.

7.4 Higher rates of municipal solid waste recovery should be achieved by separation at source and a combination of incentives and charges, including producer responsibility schemes

7.5 The burden on landfills should be reduced by waste reduction, recovery, recycling and use of best available technology.

- 7.6 Direct user charges for municipal solid municipal waste disposal should be imposed, taking into account the situation of low-income groups.
- 7.7 The setting up of a new waste authority should be considered to rationalise the responsibilities of overseeing the recycling industry, setting and administering waste charges as well as cross-departmental coordination within Government for municipal solid waste management.

Renewable Energy

- 7.8 Government should promote RE through public education and by highlighting the availability of funding schemes to carry out research into RE.
- 7.9 Government should develop a policy on RE and set a target for the amount of the local electricity supply to be derived from RE sources (i.e., solar, wind and energy from waste) .
- 7.10 Government should promote RE implementation by: offering incentives to developers and other parties to install RE equipment, installing RE facilities at Government sites and providing land for RE facilities.
- 7.11 Electricity companies should simplify procedures for small RE installations to gain access to the electricity grid.
- 7.12 Government should open the electricity market to RE suppliers, including potential suppliers from the Mainland.
- 7.13 Electricity companies should include RE in their future fuel mix for electricity generation.
- 7.14 Government should increase efforts to encourage energy conservation and efficiency through public education programmes as part of an overall sustainable energy strategy.

Urban Living Space

- 7.15 Guidelines on urban revitalisation and redevelopment should be produced incorporating the need for providing open spaces and retaining the heritage and local characteristics of the community as part of any new project.
- 7.16 Consultation mechanisms should be developed to ensure that urban renewal projects have regard to the needs of the whole community, not just the immediate vicinity of the project.
- 7.17 New residential and more commercial development should be concentrated in the NT, particularly around existing new towns and major transport and logistics nodes. Low-, medium- and high-rise residential developments and commercial projects should be encouraged to provide an attractive mix of densities.

- 7.18 The building of infrastructure and community facilities should keep pace with NT residential and commercial development.
- 7.19 Sustainable urban design should be an essential consideration in improving the quality of living space and the provision of sustainable design features should be made mandatory for many types of new buildings.

Secretariat to the Council for Sustainable Development
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