

WWF-Hong Kong

Submission on 2022-2023 Budget Recommendations



As we approach the Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), hosted by China, WWF-Hong Kong would like to offer the following suggestions and recommendations for the upcoming budget. The next decade, up to 2030, is recognized nationally and internationally as the critical “make-or-break” decade. It is critical that the Hong Kong government set out a comprehensive, ambitious, and exemplary plan to implement a holistic nature conservation policy where biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored, and wisely used, and which thereby maintains ecosystem services, and delivers benefits essential for all Hong Kong people. This is especially critical for surviving the climate crisis that is now upon us. A holistic nature conservation policy will help HKSAR government to fulfil its obligations under the CBD and to achieve its commitment of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050.

As recognized by the Chief Executive at our recent WWF-Hong Kong 40th Anniversary celebration event, WWF is keen to work with the government to support the best possible outcomes for both the people and nature of Hong Kong. We have previously addressed the Chief Executive on our policy recommendations regarding the need for and value of a holistic nature conservation policy, including integrated spatial planning, nature-based solutions for the climate crisis, sustaining wild species, marine protected areas, and transition to a circular economy.

WWF welcomes the low carbon city measures in the 2021-22 Budget announcements, especially the allocation of additional resources to help meet the government's carbon neutrality target before 2050. This year we hope to see the Government embrace a bolder vision to implement holistic nature conservation policy to achieve greener and more resilient economies, which reverse our influence on biodiversity loss and achieve a nature-positive Hong Kong by 2030.

We, therefore, urge the Financial Secretary to consider the following measures in the 2022-23 Budget:

- **Sustainable Northern Metropolis Office** – Allocate funding and resources to establish a cross-bureau office to kick-start consultation and stakeholder engagement, allowing local stakeholders, such as pond fish farming operators, green groups and the broader community, to have input. The office can recognise and protect sites of conservation importance through effective policies and regulations, alleviate development pressure on sites of conservation importance, ensure smooth transition from policy announcement to designation of protected areas, and ensure the protected areas are planned, established, and managed for conservation.
- **Circular Economy** – The government must invest in and provide incentives to small and medium enterprises with clear circular economy goals and carbon neutrality targets. Doing so will diversify Hong Kong's economy while promoting a more sustainability business model. For example, the government can set up a funding scheme for the F&B industry to develop measures to reduce single-use plastic, such as a roll out of incentive schemes for customers who bring their own tableware and replace disposable plastic with sustainable materials. For a plastic smart city, the government must allocate resources to develop a target and timeline to accelerate “no plastic in

nature” by 2030. We recommend Government resources be provided to expand the scope of Plastic Recycling Pilot Schemes to all districts. The feasibility of bans on the use of certain kinds of single-use plastic products should be evaluated. Allocate funding to develop innovative reusable packaging for courier services. Allocate resources to pilot “one bag two use” locally, to ensure no adverse impact is created from this policy. Allocate funding and resources to develop a circular economy for single-use plastic and educate public on eliminating the single-use culture.

- **Innovative Financing Solutions for Sustainable Development** – Promote innovative financing solutions to scale up conservation effort in Hong Kong, through a dedicated funding facility for sustainable development, and in particular for climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation and restoration. Solutions such as blended finance, where the public sector provides the grant or risk capital while the private sector provides the return seeking capital, can dramatically scale up investable conservation projects (what we call Bankable Nature Solutions at WWF). The idea is to leverage public funding to mobilise private sector investment for the people and nature of Hong Kong. WWF-Hong Kong can share our proven models of blending public and private finance to create a pipeline of scalable bankable projects, redirecting financial flows that benefit people and nature. The HKSAR government can and must leverage the power of capital markets' power to address the environmental challenges of our generation.
- **Nature-based Solutions** – Invest in local, nature-based solutions to address both the biodiversity and climate crisis. Allocate resources to fully integrate and mandate biodiversity values and climate impact in policies, regulations, planning, development processes, accounts, and assessments of environmental impacts at all levels and portfolios of government and across all sectors of the economy. Specifically, allocate funding to conduct research for enhancement on effectiveness of mitigation measures required under Environmental Impact Assessment and support innovative development of measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate construction impacts from proposed projects. Allocate funding to foster a “next-generation” of sustainable aquaculture, by providing financial support, low-interest grants, and incentives. Invest in modern smart aquaculture technology, traceable and sustainable fish fry hatchery and fish feed R&D. Allocate funding to support the transition to biofiltration / filter systems in all aquaculture farms.
- **Regional Strategic Environmental Assessments** – Allocate resources to formalise the procedures for conducting Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA), to incorporate principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity, including no net loss, precautionary principles, wide stakeholder participation, and incorporating traditional and scientific knowledge. Regional SEA is especially needed for renewable energy development and large scale development.
- **Marine Spatial Planning** – Establish a Marine Spatial Planning authority and allocate adequate funding to kick-start a process of marine spatial planning. Implement a plan for proper usage of our coastal waters in line with the planning processes and zoning occurring in the rest of the Greater Bay Area within Guangdong. Ensure an inclusive, transparent, and participatory

approach is adopted throughout its process; inclusive here referring to maritime and marine industry sectors (e.g. fishing; shipping, etc), as well as environmental and other community groups and all relevant government bodies. Marine spatial planning is a science-based, accountable, and widely accepted public process that helps analyse and allocate the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in a way to minimise conflicts and identify positive synergies among all sectors.

- **Biodiversity Indicator Report** – Allocate funding and resources to publish a biodiversity indicator report for Hong Kong on a regular basis. Hong Kong may be geographically small, but our vast variety of landscapes and ecosystems has blessed us with relatively high biodiversity. An official biodiversity indicator report will provide robust information for reporting biodiversity changes and actions to conserve biodiversity. These data sets will be an essential source of evidence to develop our own biodiversity or environment strategies and formulate a biodiversity policy eventually.
- **Harvest, Trade, and Use of Wild Species** – Allocate funding and resources to strengthen the traceability, regulation, monitoring and enforcement of Hong Kong's exotic pet trade markets, with priority on parrots and tortoises. Allocate funding and resources to strengthen measures to address illegal fishing, including stronger collaboration between government agencies, cross-boundary collaboration with Guangdong authorities, and strengthening penalties and awareness of enforcement agencies and judiciary. Allocate funding to enhance fisheries management, including developing an AIS system to monitor fishing activities within Hong Kong and across the boundary, provide monetary rewards to whistle-blowers of illegal fishing, and establish a user-friendly reporting system facilitating voluntary whistleblowing. Allocate funding and resources to establish a Seafood Labelling System to provide transparent information on i) source country, ii) production method and iii) scientific names on pre-packaged seafood products; such system will provide a much fairer arrangement for businesses which seek to apply sustainable business models.
- **New and Existing Marine Protected Areas (MPA)** – Invest in the establishment of a clear roadmap for the marine protected area target, to effectively manage a network of marine parks covering 30% of Hong Kong waters by 2030, including a larger and more effective Dolphin Conservation Management Area off western and southern Lantau by 2024, Shui Hau MPA by 2025 and Ninepins MPA by 2026. Allocate funding and resources to enhance MPA management, such as long-term monitoring and adaptive management, species specific conservation measures and illegal fishing enforcement. Funding is needed to develop nature stewardship and support ocean-based eco-tourism, such as developing best practices and determining the carrying capacity and environmental impact for highly visited natural locales.
- **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** – Education can be a powerful tool for transforming our relationship with nature. We must further

invest in education to reach the nature positive by 2030 goal. ESD, as an enabler for all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), is the foundation for the required transformation of positive change of mindsets and worldviews, that it can support the integration of all dimensions of sustainable development, towards the well-being of all within planetary boundaries. With the adoption of Berlin Declaration on ESD in 2021, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has called for ESD to be a core component of all education systems at all levels by 2025, so that all individuals are provided with lifelong and life-wide learning opportunities for sustainable development.

We are confident our city can be nature-positive by 2030, through integration of nature-based solutions in economic and infrastructure development. Again, reflecting the discussion at our 40th Anniversary event, WWF-Hong Kong is committed to supporting the government in a strongly solutions focused and integrated policies that support nature and people in Hong Kong.