

COUNTRY AND MARINE PARKS BOARD

Implementation Progress and Update of the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper aims to provide Members with an overview of progress made under the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) since its implementation in 2016, new global and national developments in biodiversity conservation, and the proposed direction for the updating of the BSAP and the next phase of work; and invites Members to provide comment on the next phase of work under BSAP.

2. Background

2.1 Biodiversity encompasses the variety of life on Earth, including all living organisms and their ecosystems. The diverse “ecosystem services” underpinned by biodiversity are closely linked to our community’s well-being, prosperity, and quality of life. For example, cities benefit from food provided by fisheries and farms, as well as climate regulation by forests. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasised the need to firmly establish and act on the important concept of “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets”, and highlighted that “Chinese modernisation is the modernisation of harmony between humanity and nature”. Therefore, strengthening the conservation of biodiversity is vital for achieving sustainable development.

2.2 Although Hong Kong is a small place and is one of the most urbanised cities, it possesses diverse ecosystems and rich biodiversity. We are home to over 3 300 species of vascular plants, over 50 terrestrial mammals, over 130 dragonfly species and over 240 butterfly species. Hong Kong’s waters support around 6 000 marine species, accounting for a quarter of the total recorded in the country, including more than 80 hard coral species which surpass hard coral diversity in the entire Caribbean Sea. Hong Kong has over 580 bird species, exceeding one-third of the country’s total. Beyond sheer numbers, Hong Kong shelters rare or unique species like the Golden Birdwing, Chinese Pangolin, Chinese Grassbird, Bogadek’s Burrowing Lizard and Incense Tree. These extraordinary ecosystems represent irreplaceable natural heritage demanding our conservation commitment.

2.3 The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (the Convention) aims to conserve biodiversity, promote the sustainable use of the biological resources and ecosystems that constitute biodiversity, and ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from genetic resources. China has been a Party to the Convention since 1993, application of which was extended to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) in 2011. To strengthen biodiversity conservation and support sustainable development in Hong Kong while contributing to China's obligation towards the Convention, the Government launched the BSAP in 2016 and implemented the first phase of work.

3. Progress and Achievements of the BSAP

3.1 The first phase of the BSAP proposed a total of 67 specific measures in four main areas. As a result of the concerted efforts of different sectors of society, its implementation has yielded remarkable achievements as follows:

i. Area 1: Implemented various conservation measures

The Government has significantly expanded the network of protected areas, including designation of four new Marine Parks, Robin's Nest Country Park¹, and establishment of the Long Valley Nature Park, as well as extension of the Sham Wan Restricted Area. Additionally, the Government set up the Countryside Conservation Office to strengthen countryside conservation and revitalisation efforts. Regarding species conservation, the Government has fully banned the local ivory trade and developed a series of Species Action Plans for threatened species;

ii. Area 2: Biodiversity has become mainstream

The Government has actively promoted the integration of biodiversity considerations into existing structures, processes and systems across different sectors. Achievements in this area can be seen in eco-friendly designs adopted in drainage channels, shorelines and other blue-green infrastructure projects. In addition, the Government has formulated the Blueprint for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and Fisheries to steer the sustainable development

¹ The Brothers Marine Park (designated in December 2016), Southwest Lantau Marine Park (designed in April 2020), South Lantau Marine Park (designated in June 2022), and North Lantau Marine Park (designated in November 2024) as well as Robin's Nest Country Park (designated in March 2024) were designated since the implementation of the first BSAP in 2016. The new Marine Parks covers an additional 6 087 hectares of sea area, rendering better protection for Chinese White Dolphins and Finless Porpoises. Currently, 8 517 hectares sea area is covered by Marine Parks or Marine Reserve.

of relevant industries. It is also encouraging that some private companies voluntarily incorporate nature considerations into their environmental, social and governance (ESG) frameworks, and taking concrete actions, such as creating butterfly gardens and community green spaces in shopping malls, to enhance urban biodiversity;

iii. Area 3: Relevant knowledge improved

The Government has identified priority research topics to address key unknown areas in local biodiversity, and supported related studies through various funding schemes. Additionally, the Government has established the Hong Kong Biodiversity Information Hub (HKBIH) as a one-stop public access to local biodiversity information. By consolidating data from academic institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the database has become Hong Kong's largest open-access biodiversity repository, attracting over 10 000 visits per month; and

iv. Area 4: More active engagement of the community

To raise public awareness and encourage community participation in biodiversity conservation, the Government has leveraged social media platforms and organised events such as biodiversity festivals to promote Hong Kong's rich biodiversity and its importance. Meanwhile, the HKBIH provides an online educational platform, offering hundreds of eco-activities annually, hosted by both government and NGOs for public participation.

4. The Latest Global and National Development of Biodiversity Conservation

4.1 The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention held under the presidency of China adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), which sets out two overarching goals, namely halting global biodiversity loss by 2030, and achieving harmony between humans and nature by 2050. The 23 global targets in the KMGBF cover a wide spectrum of topics (e.g. habitat and species conservation, climate change, pollution/waste reduction, green finance, biodiversity risk disclosure, sustainable consumption and blue-green space) and relatively new concepts (e.g. other effective area-based

conservation measures², or “OECM”; and nature-based solutions³, or “NbS”). Recognising the varying resource conditions and circumstances among nations, both the Convention and the KMGBF fully respect Parties’ decision to formulate and update their national biodiversity strategies and action plans in accordance with their respective national circumstances, priorities and socioeconomic conditions.

4.2 The Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) of the country released the China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2030) (NBSAP) in January 2024, outlining 27 Priority Actions and 75 Priority Projects across four priority areas, namely mainstreaming biodiversity, addressing threats of biodiversity loss, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of biodiversity, and modernisation of biodiversity governance capacities. The NBSAP identifies the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao region as one of the key strategic areas for enhanced biodiversity conservation, and emphasises strengthening regional collaborative efforts to comprehensively improve the level of biodiversity conservation within the region.

5. Hong Kong Challenges and Opportunities

5.1 HKSAR has high population density and limited land resources. In facing challenges such as public finance constraints, we must prudently and strategically allocate resources to ensure every measure for biodiversity is both effective and sustainable to allow the coexistence of urban development and nature conservation.

5.2 On the other hand, around 40% of Hong Kong’s land has been designated as country parks with a comprehensive network of protected area, and complemented by a robust legal framework, ensuring sustainable use of land and marine resources. This allows us to demonstrate the coexistence of economic vibrancy and environmental resilience, and serves as an example for other cities pursuing sustainable development. Moreover, HKSAR as a leading international financial centre, can leverage our expertise in green finance to channel investments toward the areas of nature conservation and sustainable development. HKSAR’s global connectivity and access to top-tier international talent also positions itself to be the bridge

² Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures: “Geographically defined areas distinct from traditional protected areas but managed in ways that yield positive, sustained, and long-term outcomes for biodiversity conservation, including associated ecosystem functions, services, and, when applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally significant values.” (Secretariat of the Convention)

³ Nature-based Solutions: “Actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits including on mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction.” (Secretariat of the Convention)

for international collaboration, facilitating knowledge exchange and partnerships to advance global biodiversity conservation efforts.

6. Update of the BSAP

6.1 In response to the latest global and national initiatives on biodiversity, the Government has commenced the updating of the BSAP. We will follow the mainstream practice worldwide to prioritise efforts to take forward relevant work in the next phase of the BSAP with reference to the guidance in the NBSAP and the local situation and conditions. This is to ensure that Hong Kong's city-level measures can effectively support our country's implementation of its biodiversity policy and make meaningful contribution to the KMGBF. We believe the BSAP can be updated in accordance with the following four strategic areas:

i. Area 1: Nature Conservation

To ensure the health of local ecosystems and their continued provision of services essential to our city's prosperity, we recommend to continue to enhance conservation efforts in alignment with the NBSAP's priority actions, focusing on the need to reinforce biodiversity-related policies and governance, and protection of species and habitats. Possible actions may include implementing area-based conservation measures, such as establishing the Sam Po Shue Wetland Conservation Park; exploring the application of OECM; restoring ecosystems, such as coral communities and seagrass beds, and planting native trees to rehabilitate areas damaged by hill fires or enrich the biodiversity of exotic plantations; as well as conserving species of concern through enhanced enforcement against wildlife crimes and *ex-situ* conservation programmes for threatened species;

ii. Area 2: Deepening Mainstreaming

To foster broad societal engagement, we recommend to identify entry points to consistently integrate biodiversity considerations into decision-making processes across sectors, supporting the NBSAP's priority actions that highlight awareness building and a whole-of-society effort and resources to take forward various actions to improve liveability, climate resilience and cultivation of a sustainable consumption culture in the society. Possible actions may include mobilising resources for sustainable natural resource use and conservation through funding schemes; promoting wide adoption of NbS and exploring

refinement of industry-related guidelines; and encouraging community stewardship through educational activities and wildlife gardening initiatives;

iii. Area 3: Capacity Building

To empower all members of the society to actively contribute to safeguarding biodiversity, thereby enhancing the capacity of the whole society, we recommend to advance knowledge, technical expertise and technology to contribute to the NBSAP's priority actions that focus on education and research, data collection and assessments, and smart and sustainable management of biological resources. Possible actions may include enabling innovative research through technology adoption and high-priority projects to address knowledge gaps; promoting knowledge transfer and talent development via platforms like the HKBIH and collaborations with tertiary institutions; and establishing related institutions, such as a research centre for advancing the modernisation of sustainable aquaculture; and

iv. Area 4: Collaborative Partnering

In response to the NBSAP's emphasis on strengthening international cooperation and fostering collaborative actions in key strategic regions, including the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), we recommend to continue to deepen collaborations with neighbouring cities, especially the exchanges and cooperation within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao area, to advance ecological civilization in the GBA. Such joint efforts will enable Hong Kong to share and gain valuable experiences, enhancing our contribution to the Priority Actions outlined in the NBSAP and solidifying our regional and international influence in biodiversity conservation. Possible actions may include joint initiatives with neighbouring cities on wetland and ecological corridor management, and cross-border efforts to combat illegal trade in endangered species; sharing experiences in sustainable farming and aquaculture practices; and promoting transdisciplinary collaborations through joint research, capacity-building partnerships, and participation in forums and conferences.

6.2 The updated BSAP will maintain flexibility to allow for adjustments or incorporation of new measures over time, in response to evolving global and national initiatives, local circumstances and socioeconomic conditions. In addition, the Inter-departmental Working Group on BSAP will continue to coordinate BSAP implementation within the Government and

conduct mid-term review, adaptively adjust implementation by considering progress and actual conditions, and serve as a platform for mainstreaming biodiversity and related capacity building. The Government will also continue to report the implementation progress to the Advisory Council on the Environment regularly and solicit its views on the overall implementation progress. To ensure broad awareness and engagement, the Government will actively explore diverse outreach channels, such as forums, dedicated websites and social media platforms, for sharing key achievements of the BSAP contributed by the concerted efforts of the Government and stakeholders.

6.3 The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) launched a two-month public consultation on the above four strategic areas of the updated BSAP on 12 May this year. The consultation document (**Annex**) and related information are available on AFCD's webpage⁴. The Government will evaluate feedback gathered from stakeholders, advisory bodies, the public, etc., and plans to finalise the updated BSAP for publication within 2025, for implementation in the coming decade (till 2035).

7. Advice Sought

7.1 Members are invited to comment on the implementation progress and update of the BSAP.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
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⁴ The public consultation document is available on the website of the AFCD:
https://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/conservation/Con_hkbsap/updating_bsap/updating_bsap.html