

19. 12. 2017

Green Groups Join-statement on
“Mainland's Tightening Requirements on Import of Recyclables”

Starting from early 2018, The Mainland authorities will carry out “Implementation Plan on Advancing Reform of the Administration System on Import of Solid Wastes through Prohibiting Import of Foreign Rubbish”. The Plan will bar the import of four categories of solid wastes including waste plastics from daily sources, unsorted scrap paper, discarded textile materials and Vanadium slag. Hong Kong government has announced “Three Paper & Two Plastics” scheme in Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs on 19 Dec 2017. Only cartoon papers, newspapers, office papers, no.1 and no.2 plastics will be collected and recycled. Below is the responses from Green Groups:

1. Green Groups are disappointed to see the government only cater the import restriction from China and give up other local recyclables. This is definitely a fall back.
2. MSW charging will be started in 2019. The public expect there are more recycling paths to reduce the charge. But the proposal now goes backwards, leading to disappointment from the public, who will also feel paradox on the policy.
3. It's too short for the public to change the usual recycling habit since 2018. Green Groups foresee local recyclables most probably cannot export to China due to impurities and will be all dumped to landfill or causing pollution in the ocean. The local recycling chain at the same time will collapse.
4. Green Groups believe “Three Paper & Two Plastics” is just basic, other recyclables, e.g. magazine papers, no.4, 5 & 6 plastics like plastic bags and food boxes should not be given up. Most of the magazines can be recycled after removing pages with coating. No. 4, 5 & 6 plastics can also be handled by local recycling industry to produce raw materials for export. The government should strategically support public engagement on plastic recycling to avoid resource wastage and at the same time, to promote “Clean Recycling” continuously.
5. The government should immediately implement short-term measures, e.g. make us of “Recycling Fund” to open up temporary land and recruit recycling ambassadors to sort different types of plastics. Community Green Stations, Community Recycling Network and Recycling bins managed by FEHD should be connected as a “Safe Net” to receive plastics from the public, in order to improve the collapsing recycling system and re-built public confidence.

6. The government shall establish effective system to provide adequate education to residents, front-line worker of recycling industry to ensure good recyclable quality at source by enhancing their sorting skills.
7. "Reduction at source" should be strengthened continuously, e.g. to expand the prohibited sale of single-use beverage water and to set up a clear timetable on elimination of single-use products and non-recyclable materials.
8. For mid-term measures, the government should set up a centralized hub to handle and sort different kinds of plastics systematically. Those which can be recycled should be sent to local recycling industry for making raw materials. At the same time quality certification system need to be established to provide clear guidelines to property management, cleansing and recycling industry. Those have good performance on sorting and recycling should be awarded.
9. Public consultation on packaging PRS shall be started as soon as possible. The government should provide incentive to producers for using recyclable materials, as well as promoting and implementing waste reduction at source actively.
10. The import restriction on recyclables from Mainland China is believed to be more tightened in future. The government shall focus on developing local recyclable industry to reduce relying export to Mainland China and foreign markets.

Green Groups in joint statement (Name not listed in order)

Green Earth

Greeners Action

Greenpeace

Green Power

Green Sense

WWF-Hong Kong

The Conservancy Association

Plastic Free Seas

Friend of the Earth (HK)