

Joint letter to oppose reclamation as a means to increase land supply Marine spatial planning needs to be conducted prior to any reclamation plan

Atten: Chief Executive Mrs Carrie Lam; Task Force on Land Supply

We are a group of ocean lovers who rely on the seas for our livelihood. The sea is an important and precious resource, and should be carefully managed to conserve biodiversity and support fisheries, businesses, recreation and a high quality of life. Healthy seas provide a wealth of benefits to Hong Kong communities. We object to the proposition of near-shore reclamation to build land reserves for housing needs without conducting any proper planning. Our views are based on the following:

1. Lantau Island, especially in the vicinity of Lung Kwu Tan, is the habitat of the Chinese white dolphin. Due to marine infrastructure projects and development pressure, the number of dolphins has plummeted by 70% over the past 10 years, and the rate of young dolphin sightings has hit a record low. If the reclamation project in Lung Kwu Tan goes ahead, the dolphins will be forced to Urmston Road which is frequented by marine traffic and greatly increases the risk of ship strikes. The natural coastline of Lung Kwu Tan is a breeding ground for many marine species. Destroying these natural habitats will cause irreversible ecological damage. In addition, the government plans to reclaim land at Lung Kwu Tan for industrial and other uses, including special industries, but has not considered the cumulative air pollution impacts which could be brought by those industries, risking the health of residents at the nearby Lung Kwu Tan and Ha Pak Nai villages.

2. Since end of 2012, Hong Kong has passed legislation to ban all trawling to rebuild our marine ecosystems and to establish sustainable fisheries. The government is now planning to reclaim 1,500 hectares of sea area, which could lead to huge loss of fishing grounds, affecting the livelihoods of fishermen and the development of sustainable fisheries. Rampant coastal development, which damages the spawning, nursery and foraging grounds of many marine species, is a major reason for the dwindling fishing industry. Reclamation will worsen the situation and hamper the recovery of fisheries resources. In addition, it will affect the current speed and hydrological patterns, and contribute to the accumulation of sediments and pollutants, having long-term impact on the marine environment and species.

3. According to the "5 plus 1" reclamation proposal, only part of the reclaimed land at Siu Ho Wan, Ma Liu Shui and Central waters will be for residential use, the rest will be used for industrial, leisure and sports purposes. It is an exaggeration to say reclamation can solve housing needs. The general public currently has no information on the ratio between public and private housing, and how many housing units from reclaimed land will be allocated for grassroots families, and how the government will support infrastructure and economic pressures for transportation and cross-regional employment for these new towns.

4. The seas are an asset that benefits everyone. If our seas are reclaimed without proper and holistic planning, environmental problems such as water pollution and loss of habitat will be the result. Currently, there is no plan on how to utilize the marine resources strategically, leading to conflict between conservation and development. To better conserve our valuable marine environments and cater for growing human usage, the government should consider coastal and marine spatial planning. This type of planning involves a baseline assessment of coastal and marine environments, which helps

determine compatible and incompatible uses define which areas are best suited for protection and which ones for development or heavy use.

It will take roughly 10-20 years for a single land reclamation project; not to mention extra years will be needed for planning, construction of buildings/housing, the supporting facilities and transportation systems. Marine spatial planning needs to be conducted prior to any development of reclamation plan.

Signatories (in Alphabetical Order):

- Dr Andy Cornish, Leader of WWF and TRAFFIC Shark & Ray Initiative
- BLOOM Association (HK)
- Breakaway Luxury Yachting
- The Conservancy Association
- Diving Adventure
- Eco Association
- Friends of the Earth
- Greenpeace
- Green Power
- HK Traveler
- Hong Kong Fishery Alliance
- Mr. Lau Wai Ping, Lung Kwu Tan Village Representative
- Dr. Leszek KARCZMARSKI, Cetacea Research Institute and The University of Hong Kong
- Dr. Lindsay Porter, SMRU Hong Kong, The University of St. Andrews
- Living Islands Movement
- Nextwave Yachting
- Simpson Marine
- Mr. Stephen C.Y. CHAN (Ph.D. Candidate), Cetacea Research Institute and The University of Hong Kong
- WWF-Hong Kong
- Mr. Yuen-Wa HO (Ph.D. Candidate), Cetacea Research Institute and The University of Hong Kong
- Prof Yvonne Sadovy, The University of Kong Kong