

19 October 2023

Mr Tse Chin Wan, BBS, JP
Secretary for Environment and Ecology
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government
16/F, East Wing, Central Government Offices
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar
Hong Kong

Dear Secretary Tse,

**Statement of Support to the Product Eco-responsibility (Amendment) Bill 2023 for
Regulating Disposable Plastic Tableware and Other Plastic Products
from Business Environment Council Limited
商界環保協會有限公司**

Over the last 31 years, Business Environment Council Limited 商界環保協會有限公司 (“BEC”) has played a leading role in advocating the business case for environmental excellence, given the importance of sustainable development to Hong Kong. Our members are committed to actively engage with the HKSAR Government (“the Government”) to help develop a supporting policy framework as well as impactful implementation in respect of environmental protection and sustainability.

Views expressed in this submission are those of BEC, in line with BEC’s Mission and Vision as well as policy position on relevant issues, but may not necessarily be the same as the views of each individual member. BEC is an independent charitable membership organisation comprising over 250 member companies from Hong Kong’s major holding companies to small and medium-sized enterprises.

Background

Plastics pose a heavy burden to our landfills and the natural environment. Latest figures show that amongst the municipal solid waste disposed at landfills in Hong Kong, plastics is the second-largest constituent after food waste.¹ Plastics not only remain in the environment for a long time and threaten the ecosystem, their entire product life cycle from crude oil extraction to post-disposal treatment also generated greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. To deal with the plastic waste crisis, considerable attention must be given to single-use plastics as being the main cause of plastic pollution.

In 2019, the HKSAR Government commissioned a consultancy study on the feasibility, scope and mechanism of regulating disposable plastic tableware, followed by a two-month public consultation in 2021 on a proposed scheme to regulate various types of disposable plastic tableware.² In late 2021, the Council for Sustainable Development also conducted a public engagement on the control of single-use plastics other than disposable plastic.³ Taking into account of all the findings, views and recommendations, the Government proposed to implement a control scheme on certain disposable plastic products in phases. The Product

¹ <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202212/29/P2022122900293.htm>

² See BEC’s submission on the Regulation of Disposable Plastic Tableware:
https://bec.org.hk/sites/default/files/policy_submissions/BEC%20Submission%20on%20the%20Regulation%20of%20Disposable%20Plastic%20Tableware_20210908_0.pdf

³ See BEC’s submission on the Public Engagement on Control of Single-use Plastics:
https://bec.org.hk/sites/default/files/policy_submissions/BEC%20Submission%20on%20the%20Public%20Engagement%20on%20Control%20of%20Single-use%20Plastics_Final.pdf

Eco-responsibility (Amendment) Bill 2023 (“the Bill”) was passed by the Legislative Council on 18 October 2023 for regulating disposable plastic tableware and other plastic products, and for enhancing two existing producer responsibility schemes.

Ban on disposable plastic tableware and smooth transition

BEC welcomes the Government’s ban on the supply or display of disposable plastic tableware and some other plastic products starting from 22 April 2024. This is a key step towards realising Hong Kong’s “Zero Landfill” vision as set out in the Waste Blueprint for Hong Kong 2035.

To ensure a smooth transition, BEC advises the Government to provide more detailed implementation guidelines with specific approaches and specifications of viable alternatives for the business sector. We commend the setting up of the Green Tableware Platform to address opinions from the food and beverage industry and provide information about alternatives to disposable plastic tableware. The Government may consider providing additional funding for trials aimed at scaling up research and development, as well as supply of alternatives to the Hong Kong market.

Avoid the use disposable tableware

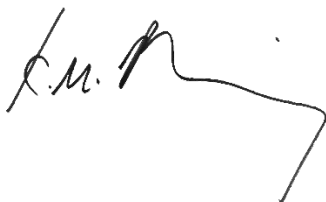
While we support the control of disposable plastic tableware, BEC wants to emphasise that it is also important to avoid the generation of waste from single use items made of other materials in the longer term. BEC is always concerned that focusing on one specific material (plastic in this case) will lead to a transfer to other alternative forms of disposable tableware, thus defeating the purpose of reducing waste going to landfills.

Hence, we strongly urge the Government to actively support reusable tableware schemes with reference to successful examples in nearby jurisdictions such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Conclusion

BEC fully supports the regulation of disposable plastic tableware and other plastic products under the Bill, and we stand ready to facilitate the business sector and other stakeholders in implementing the Bill. For queries related to this support statement, please contact our Chief Executive Officer, Mr Simon Ng at simonng@bec.org.hk

Yours sincerely,



Kevin O'Brien
Chairman
Business Environment Council Limited