

LCQ3: Achieving the carbon neutrality target

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Lo Wai-kwok and a reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 26):

Question:

The Chief Executive indicated in the 2020 Policy Address that the Government would strive to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether, in order to ensure achievement of the aforesaid target, the Government has drawn up comprehensive policy directions and measures in areas such as waste treatment, energy supply, green building, green transportation, cleaner production and green finance, and formulated implementation timetables as well as short, medium and long term key performance indicators for such measures; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will consider establishing a regular communication mechanism with the relevant Central ministries and the governments of Guangdong Province and Macao, so as to coordinate the implementation of carbon reduction initiatives in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, thereby matching the national target of achieving carbon neutrality before 2060; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will accept more views of the relevant professional sectors in order to step up efforts in achieving carbon neutrality, as well as strengthen the training and support for the relevant talents; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government attaches great importance to combating climate change. We are moving towards the 2030 target of reducing Hong Kong's carbon intensity by 65 per cent to 70 per cent, compared to the baseline year of 2005, as set out in the Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2030+. Hong Kong's carbon emissions reached its peak in 2014, and the carbon intensity in 2018 was about 36 per cent lower than that in the baseline year of 2005. To go further in deep decarbonisation, the 2020 Policy Address announced that Hong Kong would strive to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050. To this end, the Government will update the Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan later this year to formulate the relevant policies and measures comprehensively.

(1) Hong Kong's local greenhouse gases mainly come from different emission sources. Electricity generation amounted to 65.6 per cent of total emissions in 2018. Other major emission sources were the transport sector (18.1 per cent) and waste management (7.4 per cent). To reduce carbon emissions, the Government has taken a number of measures in areas such as waste management, energy supply, green building, green transport, cleaner production and green finance, etc.

On waste management, the Government announced in February 2021 the Waste Blueprint for Hong Kong 2035 to set out the vision of "Waste Reductionâ€§Resources Circulationâ€§Zero Landfill" and outline the strategies, goals and measures to tackle the challenge of waste management up to 2035. The long-term goal is to move away from reliance on landfills for direct waste disposal by developing adequate waste-to-energy facilities. As up to 90 per cent of the carbon emissions generated from waste management came from landfills, moving away from reliance on landfills could help Hong Kong achieve deep decarbonisation.

On energy supply, the Government will continue to see to it that the two power companies replace their coal-fired generating units with gas-fired ones. In 2020, the proportion of coal only accounted for less than one quarter of the fuel mix for electricity generation, which is substantially lower than its share in 2015 at about 50 per cent. On the other hand, the share of natural gas increased to around 50 per cent. We plan to raise the share of zero carbon energy further in 2025 from the current level of 28 per cent.

To promote green building, the Energy Saving Plan for Hong Kong's Built Environment 2015~2025+ promulgated in 2015 set a target of reducing energy intensity by 40 per cent by 2025. So far, the energy intensity in Hong Kong has decreased by over 30 per cent. To lead by example, the 2019 Policy Address set the first ever Green Energy Target for the whole Government, improving the energy performance of government buildings and infrastructure by 6 per cent by 2024-25. Besides, the Government will construct an additional district cooling system in the Kai Tak Development Area, and new district cooling systems in Tung Chung New Town Extension (East) and Kwo Tung North New Development Area respectively. The three projects with a total construction cost of about \$14 billion can save about 130 million kWh of electricity per annum.

To promote green transport, the Government published in March 2021 the Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles (EVs), setting out the long-term policy objectives and plans to promote the adoption of EVs and their associated supporting facilities in Hong Kong. This will guide Hong Kong towards zero vehicular emissions before 2050. This roadmap acts in concert with our target of striving for carbon neutrality within the same timeframe, thereby meeting our aspirations for "Zero Carbon Emissionsâ€§Clean Airâ€§Smart City".

To improve the regional environmental quality, the Government launched the Cleaner Production Partnership Programme and allocated \$293 million from

2008 to 2020 to facilitate the adoption of cleaner production technologies and practices by Hong Kong-owned factories in Guangdong Province and Hong Kong. The Programme has helped reduce 1.74 million tonnes of carbon emissions in the region annually. The Government allocated another \$311 million in 2020 to extend the Programme to March 2025.

As regards the promotion of green and sustainable finance, the Green and Sustainable Finance Cross-Agency Steering Group promulgated a strategic plan in December 2020. It set out six key focus areas and five near-term action points for strengthening Hong Kong's financial ecosystem. To promote market development, the Government plans to issue green bonds totalling \$175.5 billion in five years from 2021-22, having regard to the market situation. Retail green bonds will also be issued for the participation of the general public.

Notwithstanding the above, further concerted efforts and adoption of more forward-looking strategies are required for Hong Kong to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050. We will formulate long-term decarbonisation strategies and set the required targets for each major area when updating the Hong Kong Climate Action Plan.

(2) The Government has been conducting exchanges and collaborations with the Guangdong Provincial Government and Macao SAR Government on environmental protection matters, including decarbonisation, through platforms such as the Hong Kong-Guangdong Joint Working Group on Environmental Protection and Combating Climate Change and the Hong Kong-Macao Environmental Protection Liaison Meeting. Following the directions of green and low-carbon development as set out in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), we will capitalise on the opportunities to strengthen exchanges and collaborations with other GBA cities in building low-carbon communities, developing carbon reduction technologies and promoting low-carbon products.

(3) Achieving carbon neutrality is a very challenging target that requires support from different professionals and talents to strengthen the development and application of innovation technologies. The public engagement on Hong Kong's long-term decarbonisation strategy conducted by the Council for Sustainable Development has proactively collected public views, including those from different professional bodies and relevant experts. Since the announcement of the carbon neutrality target, the Government has been maintaining a close dialogue with various professional bodies on possible ways to achieve the target. To enhance staff development within the Government, the Government has set up an inter-departmental task force to study the global development of relevant technologies and strategies. The Government will also support the research and development and decarbonisation efforts of local organisations and industries through initiatives such as the Green Tech Fund and the Cleaner Production Partnership Programme, with a view to enhancing our soft and hard power, moving towards carbon neutrality.

Thank you, President.