

**Speech By Dr. Annie S C Wu,
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For those of us working and living in Hong Kong, climate change has already become a fact of life for quite some time. Even before the very timely warning given in former US Vice-President Al Gore's 2006 film "An Inconvenient Truth" and the stark facts and figures provided in the 2006 Stern Report, the Hong Kong public had already been previously awakened to the rude realities of climate change.

In recent years, our summers are getting progressively hotter and our winters are getting progressively milder - last year in 2006, the hottest October and November in the past 100 years were recorded. Today, air-conditioning in the home and workplace is a necessity, whereas for those of us who can still remember Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s, air-conditioning then was not needed and was actually a rarity. On a more frivolous note, fashionable ladies used to be able to show off their mink coats on a total of 10 days or so per year; recently however, the extremely mild winter months meant that such opportunities for wearing fur garments in Hong Kong have virtually disappeared.

A study by the Hong Kong Observatory predicts a warming of 3 degrees Celsius in Hong Kong over the next century. Bearing in mind that many large residential areas and the core business district are congregated along the low-lying shoreline of Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour, any perceptible sea level rise due to global warming will strongly impact upon all aspects of life in Hong Kong: from flooded homes and businesses, water and food supplies, to public health and biodiversity.

There is no doubt that the Government and big business in Hong Kong are fully aware of the need to reduce and if possible, reverse this trend. Back in 1999, Hong Kong's then Chief Executive Mr TUNG Chee-wah made it clear in his annual Policy Address that our endeavour to building Hong Kong into a world-class city and making Hong Kong a clean, comfortable and pleasant home would require a fundamental change of mindset - every citizen, every business, every Government agency needs to start working in partnership to achieve sustainable development.

In early 2003, Mr Tung established the Council for Sustainable Development to promote sustainability in Hong Kong. It had the following specific tasks -

- a. to advise the Government on the priority areas it should address in promoting sustainable development;
- b. to advise on the preparation of a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong that will integrate economic, social and environmental perspectives;
- c. to facilitate community participation in the promotion of sustainable development in Hong Kong through various means, including the award of grants from the Sustainable Development Fund; and
- d. to promote public awareness and understanding of the principles of sustainable development.

In Hong Kong however, we suffer badly on many days during the year from air pollutants generated in Mainland China which are then carried into Hong Kong's atmosphere by prevailing south-easterly winds. For Hong Kong therefore, any reduction or reversal of the carbon emissions produced in Mainland China, often dubbed the world's factory and also its largest construction site, will have a direct and immediate positive impact on the air pollution affecting Hong Kong.

It is most fortunate therefore that in recent months, China's top leaders have come out strongly in favour of environmental protection, even if it is at the expense of China's economic growth, in order to protect the environment.

- In March 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao told the annual session of the National People's Congress that China must stop simply striving for economic growth and instead cut energy consumption.

"We must make conserving energy, decreasing energy consumption, protecting the environment and using land intensively the breakthrough point and main fulcrum for changing the pattern of economic growth", said Premier Wen.

- More recently, at the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting earlier this month, President Hu Jintao put forward four proposals for tackling climate change, including ways of strengthening cooperation, pursuing sustainable development and promoting scientific and technological innovation.

"... efforts are needed to pursue sustainable development, as climate change is ultimately a development issue and it can only be addressed in the course of sustainable development", President Hu said.

This very public commitment by China towards energy conservation and sustainable development, coming from the very top of the country's central government, constitutes truly welcome news for the rest of the world. For us in Hong Kong in particular, this holds the real promise that the level carbon emissions being produced next door to us, in China's Pearl River Delta, will be coming down in the foreseeable future.

As for our locally produced emissions, power generation and transportation are the two major sources,

According to figures provided by CLP Holdings Limited, the power company which serves more than 79% of Hong Kong's population, its 2006 GHG (greenhouse gas emissions) were within 2% of its 1990 emissions despite a growth of more than 80% in usage since then. Such remarkable reductions in GHG emissions relative to productivity were achieved by fuel diversification, specifically into nuclear and natural gas. Unfortunately, unless an LNG (liquified natural gas) terminal is constructed in Hong Kong within the next 10 to 15 years, a large growth in GHG emissions from Hong Kong's power stations may be unavoidable in the future. However, plans for a LNG terminal in Hong Kong are being opposed by green groups.

Given Hong Kong's particular topography which is very hilly with small pockets of flat land here and there and along the shoreline, generating renewable power by solar energy and wind energy farms is not a very ideal solution.

Rather, a better way to reduce Hong Kong's carbon emissions is for every individual to personally adopt energy conservation and energy-efficient measures in his and her home, place of work and travelling habits. For 2001-2004, the most recent official figures available, the annual pattern of energy consumption is : 18% by the Household sector; 34% to 36% by the Commercial sector; 36% by the Transport sector; 10% to 12% by the Industrial sector.

Hong Kong, which is 1,104 square kilometres in area, has a population of about 6.92 million individuals which is housed in more than 2.2 million households. There are about 276,000 Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Hong Kong, providing job opportunities to over 1.2 million individuals, which is about 50% of total employment in the private sector. Therefore, there is tremendous scope for each individual to

make significant impact in reducing Hong Kong's carbon footprint by personally adopting an energy-efficient and environmentally-sustainable lifestyle.

In Hong Kong, we are therefore in the most fortuitous position where all the stakeholders (i.e. the Central Government, the HKSAR Government, big business, the general public) are already fully aware of the harmful effect of climate change and are fully in agreement on the need to battle climate change.

In Hong Kong, NGOs has an important role in mobilizing the grassroots so that each individual will be able to contribute in meaningful way to this battle. The good intentions of government officials and big business, though essential for this battle, often take a long lead time to produce results. Hong Kong is historically renowned for the private individual's initiative and enterprise. If small groups of individuals can be encouraged and motivated into successfully combating climate change in some small way by changing their own conduct, then the resources of Government and big business can be harnessed into facilitating and providing more incentives to make such conduct change more widespread.

I know of one NGO which has plans for transforming one existing typical Hong Kong suburban house into a low-energy, environmentally-sustainable home. Another medium-sized NGO is investigating how to transform its headquarters, which was built in the previous century, into a low-energy, environmentally-sustainable building. If successful, these examples can be copied by private individuals throughout Hong Kong with Government's help and support. The more successful reforms are often people-led, not Government-led. The most successful reforms are people-led AND Government-supported.

It is most timely that UN Climate Change Conference will take place in Bali on 3 to 14 December, just 2 months from now. I do hope that the participants of the Bali Conference will be able to visit Hong Kong, either on their way to Bali or on their way back, and to see the on-going efforts of our Government, our big business and or close-to 7 million individuals are trying to combat environmental change (within our 1,000 square metre footprint. On behalf of the WTCA-HK, I warmly invite all delegates of the Bali Conference to come to Hong Kong.

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