

From: Paul Whitehead
Date: 25/05/2015 21:12
Subject: Re: Subcommittee on Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage) Regulation and Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage) Regulation (Repeal) Regulation: Meeting on 26 May 2015 - Invitation for submissions

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for inviting us to submit our comments. Eco Marine is a non-profit organization that aims to promote local marine awareness in Hong Kong. Over the last several years, we have hosted many activities along the Hong Kong shorelines and in Hong Kong waters including numerous beach and underwater cleanups and various survey and research programs. We have worked together closely with government departments including AFCD, EPD, FEHD, MD, LCSD and the Inter-departmental Working Group on Clean Shorelines, as well as other non profit organizations, and have reached thousands of Hong Kong citizens and residents through our outreach activities.

Our first hand experience working in Hong Kong waters and along Hong Kong shorelines evidences to us that the marine refuse issue is present, large and increasing with time. Despite the concerted efforts of volunteers, non-profit groups and government, waste is accumulating in the oceans at a greater rate than we are currently cleaning it up. The Marine Refuse Study Report released by the Inter-departmental Working Group on Clean Shorelines on 17 April 2015 found that 70% of marine refuse comprises of plastic and foam plastic items. This type of waste degrades slowly: a plastic bottle is estimated by scientists take on average 450 years to degrade. When plastic breaks down in the ocean, dangerous chemicals enter the water, endangering marine life and contaminating the food chain. This problem is not only confined to Hong Kong waters but is a global one. As Asia's World City and a global leader, Hong Kong should step up its efforts to tackle this important global issue.

The Marine Refuse Study Report found that more than 80 percent of Hong Kong marine refuse originates from land-based sources. This means that around 20 percent of such marine refuse originates from non land-based sources. Whilst working in Hong Kong waters and along Hong Kong shorelines, we have seen numerous instances of recreational and commercial vessels depositing waste into Hong Kong waters. We also have first hand experience of collecting suspected vessel waste on beaches including fishing nets, ropes, foam containers, oil containers, steel drums, plastic drums, container tags. We agree strongly with the Marine Refuse Study Report that the marine refuse problem is "mainly a result of littering and poor awareness by members of the community". Whilst we applaud the government's and non-profit groups' huge efforts to raise awareness on the seriousness of the marine

refuse problem to community groups including commercial vessel groups, we need to continue to escalate our efforts exponentially in order to begin to reverse the course of marine refuse. We support further legislation to regulate vessel garbage, stricter enforcement and education programs to align community mindset toward tackling the marine waste problem together.

Best regards,
Eco Marine
25 May 2015