

PRESS RELEASE

Hong Kong Think Tank Urges Immediate Climate Actions

Hong Kong can achieve net zero emissions by 2050 if all parties act now

HONG KONG, 29 June 2020 – If we act now, Hong Kong can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by decarbonizing the power sector, improving building efficiency, and enhancing mobility, according to a comprehensive roadmap released today by Civic Exchange, an independent public policy think tank, and World Resources Institute (WRI), a global research organization.

The report highlights the urgency as well as the opportunities for Hong Kong to strengthen policy action. The recommendations can not only guide Hong Kong to significant emissions reductions by 2050, they also offer Hong Kong a glimpse of a carbon-neutral future that is greener and more-liveable, with minimal pollution, readily available public transport, healthy low-carbon lifestyles and more. To achieve this, the city must step up as a leader in combating the global climate emergency.

“Unlike other cities, Hong Kong doesn’t have a manufacturing economy so is relatively easier to decarbonize,” said Lawrence Lu, a co-author of the report launched *Towards a Better Hong Kong: The Pathway to Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2050*.

In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) urged the international community to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 to avoid irreversible consequences of climate change. WRI and Civic Exchange’s report states that Hong Kong is likely to achieve our 2030 climate target of reducing absolute carbon emissions by 26-36% compared with 2005. Hong Kong has yet to set targets to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

“Over the past decades, Hong Kong has made significant progress in promoting low-carbon development. Since 2005, Hong Kong’s GDP grew by about 50% but greenhouse gas emissions reduced by 1.2%. This indicates that Hong Kong’s economic growth has already decoupled from greenhouse gas emissions.” said Wee Kean Fong, Deputy Director of WRI China. “However, to achieve global net zero emission by 2050, all cities around the world, including Hong Kong, will need to step up climate action urgently.”

The report evaluates key policies for the economy and provides policy recommendations for strengthening Hong Kong’s transition to a net zero emission society. Among these, power generation, building energy efficiency, and transportation are the sectors with the greatest potential for emission reductions, amounting to a total of 32 million tonnes of carbon dioxide between now and 2050 should the report’s policy recommendations be fully adopted.

“By embracing the net zero emissions pathway, we can look forward to a cleaner, greener and healthier Hong Kong,” said Lisa Genasci, CEO of the ADM Capital Foundation. “and reap significant economic and social benefits, in particular, life quality improvement and job creations.” Overall, 26,000 lives could be saved from cleaner air alone and there would be HK\$ 460 billion in monetized benefits by 2050.

This report is the first in a series of projects by Hong Kong 2050 is Now, a joint initiative commissioned by Civic Exchange and WRI with a mission of transforming Hong Kong into a carbon neutral city. The current report was jointly funded by RS Group, ADM Capital Foundation, WYNG Foundation and HSBC. HK2050 is Now is currently embarking on Phase Two—conducting deep dives into sector-specific areas, including energy supply, building energy efficiency, transportation, carbon pricing, and lifestyle to provide analysis and more detailed solutions for Hong Kong.

Key Policy Recommendations for Hong Kong’s Roadmap to a Zero-Emissions Future

Decarbonization Sector	Reduction potential (million tons CO2e)	Key policies
Energy	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop more local renewable energy • Complete the transition from coal to gas fired electricity generation. Plan to add carbon capture and storage (CCS) to gas fired generation units when the technology is viable • Source more near zero carbon energy from regional sources • Replace gas with zero or near zero hydrogen
Building Energy Efficiency	10.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce stricter energy efficiency standards • Make transparent energy efficiency reporting a pre-requisite for GFA concessions. • Incentivize retrofits.
Transportation	6.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tighten vehicle fuel economy standards • Implement an electric vehicle sales mandate by mid-2030

In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from its own territory, Hong Kong must consider the implications of the global move to net zero. In particular, (a) Greenhouse gas emissions from producing the food, manufactured goods and building materials it imports; and, (b) the impact on its economy of reducing shipping and aviation emissions. For this Hong Kong needs better information. For example, to obtain a better understanding of the emissions required to construct buildings, the report recommends making it a pre-requisite for GFA concessions that a Life Cycle Analysis is provided for a new building before an occupation permit is issued.

Please scan the following QR codes to download our presentation deck and executive summary, and visit the newly launched online platform to find out more about Hong Kong 2050 is Now:

CEx Presentation Deck



Full Policy Report



Executive Summary (English)



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**About Hong Kong 2050 is Now**

Hong Kong 2050 is Now is a joint initiative of Civic Exchange, World Resources Institute, RS Group and ADM Capital Foundation, WYNG Foundation and HSBC to galvanise collective action towards a climate neutral Hong Kong by 2050. We aim to engage partners across relevant sectors to shed light on Hong Kong's pathway to climate neutrality. This includes research, policy and other recommendations in key sectors, including energy, mobility, building efficiency, nature-based solutions, lifestyle considerations and carbon pricing.

About Civic Exchange

Civic Exchange is an independent public policy think tank with a vision to shape a liveable and sustainable Hong Kong. Our mission is to engage society and influence public policy through research, dialogue and the development of practical solutions. Civic Exchange has been ranked among the top 50 environment policy think tanks in the world by the University of Pennsylvania since 2011.

About World Resources Institute

World Resources Institute (WRI) is a global research organization that spans more than 50 countries, with offices in Brazil, China, Europe, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Mexico, and the United States. Our more than 1,000 experts and staff turn big ideas into action at the nexus of environment, economic opportunity and human well-being. We work on seven urgent challenges: climate, energy, food, forests, water, cities and ocean. We deliver on these challenges in part through our expertise in business, economics, finance and governance.

Media Enquiries

Please contact Ms. Fiona Lau, Programme Manager at Civic Exchange and Hong Kong 2050 is Now at flau@civic-exchange.org or 59637397.