

***Hong Kong Chronicles: Nature* Launched with a Forum on Environment & Ecology**

29 November 2023, HONG KONG – Hong Kong Chronicles Institute (HKCI) today marked the debut of *Hong Kong Chronicles: Nature* in a ceremony in conjunction with a Forum on Environment & Ecology. The new book series on nature provides an all-round introduction to Hong Kong's ecological history and its lineage with the Mainland for a greater understanding of its origin and people. The Forum on Environment & Ecology consisted of two expert panels of environmental scientists, entrepreneurs, corporate and NGO representatives, with a focus on Hong Kong's policies regarding environmental governance and issued related to environmental, social and governance (ESG), serving to facilitate a low-carbon, sustainable and beautiful Hong Kong.

Hong Kong Chronicles: Nature Launched in the Presence of 30 Guests

The ceremony was officiated by 30 guests, including Mr Tse Chin-wan, Secretary for Environment and Ecology of the HKSAR Government; Mr Zhang Guoyi, Deputy Director-General, Department of Publicity, Cultural and Sports Affairs, Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR; Prof Wong Yuk-shan, Deputy Director of the Hong Kong Basic Law Committee under the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress; Prof Lee Chack-fan, Chief Convenor of HKCI Academic Review Committee; Dr Lam Ching-choi, Non-Official Member of the Executive Council of the HKSAR Government and Chairman of the Council for Carbon Neutrality and Sustainable Development; Dr Yang Siu-shun, Steward of The Hong Kong Jockey Club; and Mr Bernard Charnwut Chan, Chairman of Our Hong Kong Foundation and Chairman of HKCI. Mr Huang Runqiu, Minister of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China, and Mr Cui Weihang, Director of China Local Chronicles Work Office, delivered their remarks in a video, congratulating the successful launch of the book series while promoting the development of a beautiful Mainland and a beautiful Hong Kong.

"While promoting environmental protection and green transformation, I hope that all of you will also promote Hong Kong's unique edges, so that more people could better understand Hong Kong and appreciate its extraordinary charms when they come here for business and pleasure," said Mr Bernard Chan in his welcome speech.

In his remarks, Mr Huang Runqiu, Minister of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China, offered three suggestions for Hong Kong: firstly, it should make use of its unique advantages and play an active role in the Beautiful China Initiative; secondly, it should take an active part in the building of a green Belt and Road Initiative; thirdly, it should strengthen its regional cooperation mechanism in order to promote the building of a more beautiful Greater Bay Area. Huang further suggested that *Hong Kong Chronicles: Nature* has shown Hong Kong's awareness about environmental protection and demonstrated the inseparable connection between Hong Kong and its motherland in terms of geography, ecology, culture, history and so on. By making use of the fine tradition of Chinese local chronicles, compatriots in Hong Kong could further strengthen their unity and national pride, actively participate in the Mainland's overall development and bring about new breakthroughs to Hong Kong.

In his speech, Mr Tse Chin-wan, Secretary for Environment and Ecology of the HKSAR Government, said “the HKSAR Government has been actively protecting Hong Kong’s rich biodiversity while developing the economy. We are planning to establish Hong Kong’s 25th country park next year at Robin’s Nest of Sha Tau Kok, as well as the eighth marine park on North Lantau Island. Different natural conservation projects will also be included in the development plan of Northern Metropolis to achieve the visions of ecological conservation and urban-rural integration. I hope that *Hong Kong Chronicles: Nature* will deepen the public’s understanding about the ecosystem, hence achieving harmony between human and nature by promoting care for our natural environment and a low-carbon lifestyle.”

In his remark, Mr Cui Weihang, Director of China Local Chronicles Work Office, praised the *Hong Kong Chronicles: Nature* for its rich content. The compilation process—a joint effort brining together the wisdom of experts in the fields of environment, oceanography, ecology, geology, history and so on—has demonstrated professionalism and writing quality of the highest standard. Cui believed compatriots in Hong Kong could deepen their understanding about Hong Kong’s beautiful environment and unique ecology through this book series, thus further strengthen their awareness about environment protection and consolidate the vision of green development. In the process, national pride and sense of belonging would be enhanced as the public becomes fully committed to promoting Hong Kong’s long-term socio-economic prosperity.

An Encyclopaedia of Hong Kong’s Natural History

Written and reviewed by 67 local experts and scholars, *Hong Kong Chronicles: Nature* comprises five books in four print volumes, totalling 1.4 million words. It is the first set of books to combine natural science with the history of Hong Kong, providing a panoramic view of the city’s administrative establishment, districts, population, natural environment, resources and ecology, as well as its efforts on environmental protection and ecological conservation. It provides an objective, systematic and comprehensive account on the evolution of Hong Kong’s geography and ecosystem, serving as an encyclopaedia of natural history.

Forum on Environment & Ecology

In July, HKCI—supported by the government, business sector and general public—launched its “Beautiful Hong Kong” campaign in response to the Mainland’s 14th Five-Year Plan, HKSAR Government’s visions on energy saving, carbon reduction and green development, as well as the opening of the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) on 30 November. The Forum on Environment & Ecology, in conjunction with the launch of *Hong Kong Chronicles: Nature*, served as the campaign’s grand finale. The Forum focused on the practice and innovation of environmental governance as well as the opportunities and challenges of ESG. By finding a path for human and nature to coexist and a sweet spot between development and conservation, it aimed to achieve four major goals: nurture a sense of national belonging upon Hong Kong people, share experience in environmental governance, raise the public’s awareness in environmental protection and promote green transformation.

In a keynote speech, Dr Lam Ching-choi, Non-Official Member of the Executive Council of the HKSAR Government and Chairman of the Council for Carbon Neutrality and Sustainable Development, said that “there is a pressing need for further carbon reduction and promotion of green development. All sectors of the community should prepare for transformation into a low-carbon economy and make use of new technologies, such as resource management, digitisation and smart solutions, so as to achieve green and sustainable development. Talent development should be supported to provide a solid foundation and strong momentum for various sectors to carry out green transformation.”

Environmental Management: Implementation and Innovation

The first panel session, titled “Environmental Management: Implementation and Innovation—The Mission of Green Groups in Sustainable Development,” was moderated by Prof. Wong Yuk-shan, Deputy Director of the Hong Kong Basic Law Committee under the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, Emeritus President of Hong Kong Metropolitan University and Chief Editor of the “Environmental Protection and Ecological Conservation” book of *Hong Kong Chronicles: Nature*. Panellists included Ms Nicole Wong, Chief Executive Officer of World Wide Fund For Nature Hong Kong; Ms Natalie Chung, Co-Founder & CEO of V’air Hong Kong; Dr. Xoni Ma, Founder and Education Director of Outdoor Wildlife Learning Hong Kong; and Mr Wander Meijer, Executive Director of Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden.

The five panellists shared on how each of their green organisations devised its development strategy in order to achieve the vision and missions, as well as how green organisations could convey the message of conservation effectively. They also discussed how changes in relevant policies and regulations affected green organisations, as well as some unique challenges these organisations had to face in Hong Kong and how they respond. Last but not least, they offered some advice to local organisations that were looking to take an active role in environmental conservation and sustainable development, calling for the implementation of sound environmental policies, strategies and ordinances to promote the vision of coexistence between human and nature.

Prof. Wong Yuk-shan, who has been involved in environmental science for over 40 years, highlighted three key elements through which to improve the environment: regulation, technology and education. Green organisations, he said, played a particularly vital role in education. He also suggested that green organisations should constantly provide constructive advice to the government on relevant policies. By work together, the goal of environmental protection will be achieved.

Ms Nicole Wong suggested that NGOs should formulate long-term policies and work together to complement one another. Different stakeholders should also participate actively for a joint effort in promoting Hong Kong as a sustainable city in Asia.

Ms Natalie Chung emphasised cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral cooperation, so that different sectors could recognise the importance and necessity of environmental protection and participate in conservation works. She said that close cooperation between different stakeholders would not only benefit all the involving parties but could also bolster the whole society’s willingness to promote sustainable development.

Dr. Xoni Ma pointed out that environmental issues often began with people. He said the mission of an environmental educator is to inspire people, promote environmental protection through education and nurture a love for nature with the general public by bringing them outdoor for a first-hand experience.

On the challenges facing green organisations in Hong Kong, Mr Wander Meijer suggested that adequate funding and resources were needed for these organisations to achieve their short-term goals and long-term visions, noting education as a key component in changing people's mindset.

ESG: Challenges and Opportunities

The second panel, titled "ESG: Challenges and Opportunities—Corporate Initiatives for a Green Economy," was moderated by Mr Manuel Baigorri, Head of Sustainability of The Hong Kong Jockey Club. Panellists included Ms Melanie Kwok, Assistant General Manager (Sustainability) of Sino Group; Ms Phoenix Hau, Head of Sustainability Section of Ocean Park Corporation; Mr Mark Harper, Group Head of Sustainability of John Swire & Sons (H.K.) Ltd; and Mr Peter Guo, Chief Designer of China Resources Land (Overseas) Limited.

Moderated by Mr Manuel Baigorri, panellists shared their views on how to achieve a broader ESG commitment and find a sweet spot between development and conservation. The panellists talked about some key challenges facing corporations aiming to implement sustainability initiatives in Hong Kong and what role the government could play in incentivising corporations to prioritise ESG and green transformation.

When asked what advice they would offer to local organisations looking to play an active part in sustainable development, Ms Melanie Kwok noted that sustainability should not be an end but a journey instead. Organisations should therefore stay passionate about protecting the earth and keep learning throughout the process.

Ms Phoenix Hau suggested that organisations should be adaptive in following the ESG trend. Nurturing a conservation culture within the organisation is also important, starting from little things such as saving electricity and promoting recycling.

Mr Mark Harper advised organisations to maintain a "just do" spirit and not to be overwhelmed by the complexity of the issue. Moreover, they should not simply aim for compliance of sustainability standards, but instead should treat ESG as a solution for risk-reduction and a possible way to generate future opportunities.

Mr Peter Guo offered three suggestions in his response: firstly, organisations should aim to develop a long-term ESG strategy that is supported by practical plans; secondly, such plans should be concrete and specific; finally, maximum efforts should be put into these plans once they are implemented, so as to ensure the best result.

About HKCI

Hong Kong Chronicles Institute was established by Our Hong Kong Foundation in August 2019. The Institute brings together community leaders, experts and scholars to undertake the historic mission of compiling the first-ever *Hong Kong Chronicles*. *Hong Kong Chronicles* is compiled by adhering to the guiding principle of recounting historical facts without interpretation to provide a comprehensive, systematic and objective record of local history and development, achieving the goals of preserving history, providing reference for policymaking and educating the people. The book series covers 10 content categories and is scheduled for completion by 2027.

Website: <https://hkchronicles.org.hk/>

About “Beautiful Hong Kong”

Nature provides the basic conditions for human survival and development. The challenges of tackling climate change, promoting green development as well as encouraging harmonious coexistence between human and Nature are not only major global trends but are also important policy issues in the Mainland and Hong Kong. As such, along with the launch of *Hong Kong Chronicles: Nature* and in collaboration with 58 government departments, enterprises, NGOs, environmental groups and media partners, HKCI aims to promote green transformation by bringing together the government, business sector and general public. In July 2023, the “Beautiful Hong Kong” campaign was officially unveiled by Chief Secretary Eric Chan Kwok-ki. The campaign consists of four major activities, namely “Top 10 Natural Wonders of Hong Kong,” “Young Eco-guide Programme,” “Student Eco-learning Programme” and “Launch of *Hong Kong Chronicles: Nature* and Forum on Environment & Ecology.”

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