**Climate Change Corner**

**Climate Change and Hong Kong**

I write this article on the day Beijing has issued its first every orange alert indicating that visibility was less than 200m. Such conditions are threatening for human health and pose dangerous conditions for transportation with economic ramifications when smog shuts down highways and railway systems.

A climate reality fact is that globally, the 20 warmest years on record occurred between the period 1987 and 2012 with 2012 being the warmest yet. This disturbing trend is cause for alarm. But let’s bring things closer to home. According to the HK Observatory’s climate change information “The rate of increase in average temperature became faster in the latter half of the 20th century. In post-war years from 1947 to 2011, the average rise amounted to 0.15°C per decade, accelerating to 0.23°C per decade during 1982-2011.” Adding to that, data shows the rise of sea level in Victoria Harbour has been 2.8mm per year since 1954 with a 19% spike between the early 1990’s and 2011 from chart datum.

Global climate disruption leads to extreme, unpleasant, and disturbing weather events including floods, droughts, heat waves, wildfires, and extreme storms such as hurricane Sandy and its devastation of New York.

When we burn dirty energy like oil, coal, and gas, we pollute our air and heat up our planet. One only needs to gaze out the window to see we have an air quality problem in Hong Kong. HK Observatory data shows the number of hours recorded annually with visibility less than 8km (excluding causes of high humidity, fog, mist or rain) has increased by around 600% since 1988.

In an OECD issued report ranking global cities by assets most vulnerable to sea level rises by 2070, Hong Kong is number 9 on the list. Guangzhou is ranked second.

Hong Kong needs to move quickly on changing its fuel mix, addressing maritime emissions together with the PRD and doing more than just replacing older diesel vehicles on roads. Cleaner diesels are not the future, electric is and unfortunately thus far there has been little commitment to replacing bus fleets (the source of roadsides emissions the public is most likely to breathe in while waiting for buses) with electric alternatives.

While the debate over climate change continues, if global moves to develop cleaner energy sources achieve nothing more than to reduce air pollution, the associated health benefits and improved quality of life will bring economic and social benefits far outweighing the costs.

==================================================================***This article is contributed by Chris Knop, Independent Management Consultant, with the co-ordination of the Environmental Division.***