

## **Government should show Hong Kong is serious about climate change**

On November 13 the Global Carbon Project announced that carbon emissions for 2017 were predicted to rise by 2 per cent after slowing down over the last three years.

China's growing economy and demand for coal and the world's continued reliance on oil and gas have contributed to this increase.

On the same day, a letter was published, cosigned by over 15,000 scientists from 184 countries, warning that the world must rapidly embrace sustainability if we want to avoid catastrophic climate change. These announcements came during the two-week-long 23rd UN climate change conference, held in Bonn, Germany.

While no groundbreaking decisions were made in Bonn, there was some good news, with Syria formally signing the Paris accord, along with Nicaragua. Scotland, which built the world's first floating wind farm last month, has announced it will be able to meet 100 per cent of its electricity demand with renewable energy by 2020 – five years ahead of schedule. And although the US government has said it will withdraw from the Paris accord, individual cities and states have formed "America's Pledge", an alliance which promises to uphold the US's climate commitments.

What about Hong Kong? Some may consider the city to be inconsequential to the grand scheme of things, given that it produces relatively little greenhouse gas. However, taking into account our consumption patterns and heavy reliance on importing goods, our footprint surpasses that of the US at 29 tonnes of carbon per person. In fact, we are second only to Luxembourg, a European country that is also reliant on imports.

To Hong Kong and many developed cities, climate change is less a problem of the energy we use directly, than the energy embedded in the goods we consume. However, sustainable consumption is more than just consuming greener products. It is about consuming less and finding well-being beyond material goods.

Hong Kong may be a small city, but it is a global player – doubly so when it sits on the steering committee of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group. Compared to technological solutions, sustainable consumption is certainly less appealing to the public. But given that it represents the city, the government has a duty to show the world that Hong Kong too is serious about climate change and willing to lead the shift towards sustainability.

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