
Speech by YAB Chow Kon Yeow, The Chief Minister of Penang “Exploring Steps on How Penang Can Work with EU Cities to Contribute Towards a Greener Circular Economy in Malaysia” 02 July 2020



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon! It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the Stakeholder Consultation webinar today co-organized by the Penang Green Council team and the International Urban Cooperation (IUC) Asia team.

I am happy to learn that IUC Asia is working on a Circular Cities Project which aims to foster city-to-city cooperation between cities in Penang and several European cities. Cooperation is within the framework of the IUC Asia project of the European Union, and Penang Green Council has been appointed as the lead stakeholder in the stakeholder consultations for this project which is financed by the European Union (EU).

Today's stakeholder consultation is the first initiative with IUC Asia to continue collaboratively and bilaterally with the Circular Economy efforts in Malaysia, where cities in Europe and Penang engage in city-to-city cooperation in the following three key areas:

- 1) Research & Innovation
- 2) Knowledge Transfer of Best Practices
- 3) Exploring Investments and Business Opportunities

Cooperation in these areas will be promoted when it comes to designing circular cities with current sustainable developments and by advocating sustainable, environmental and climate-friendly solutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Malaysian Government has announced the launch of a 'Circular Economy Roadmap' that aims for Malaysia to lead the Southeast Asia's circular economy development. A push for change would, in fact, spur the local economy, as new solutions are developed to cope with the problem of waste and limited resources.

The Malaysian government has set out the goal that 20% of our energy consumption will be renewable in 2025. The lack of a functioning system for sustainable waste management is an area where change is necessary, and that waste is an untapped resource for bio-energy. Energy efficiency as well as further legislation to preserve natural resources is also high on the agenda for the Malaysian Government and the Penang State Government is ready to take the lead in starting the conversation and implementation on the green agenda.

In fact, the Penang State Government had launched the state's first written vision – **Penang2030** – an action plan with a focus on improving liveability, upgrading the economy, strengthening civic participation, and building a balanced environment to achieve a “**A Family-Focused Green and Smart State that Inspires the Nation**”. Today, the Penang State Government and our key stakeholders are keen to engage with our EU counterparts. We would like to develop strategic steps and together, explore how we can work with EU cities to contribute towards a Greener Circular Economy in Malaysia with the two cities in Penang leading the way.

We hope to achieve a goal with all of you today, which is, to influence everyone present in this webinar to make a conscious shift from linear thinking (take, make, use, waste) by transforming individuals, companies and communities to adopt circular thinking, a process that is regenerative in design and key to contributing to the implementation of the **Penang2030** vision by transforming cities in Penang into circular ones.

I hope Penang cities can create an innovative platform in Malaysia to spark off collaboration between Malaysian business owners with our EU counterparts. Hopefully to grow and groom all stakeholders in the two cities in Penang and across Malaysia as well!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Penang's Chief Minister, I am aware that there is no alternative to a balanced development. Our economy needs to develop alongside the conservation of our environment and our planet. I have made this emphasis over the years that a well-kept balance between economic growth and ecological protection is our goal towards a green state for all. A successful city-to-city pairing, therefore, must involve sound decisions to invest wisely and effectively to ensure that our city is well-equipped to increase its liveability, while at the same time, to improve on its resilience.

Both the Penang State City Councils and the Penang Green Council are working hard and smart with the citizens to promote a greener and healthier lifestyle during our nationwide events. Since Single Use Plastics is a key focus in the discussion today with EU experts, I would like to take this opportunity to share what Penang has embarked on thus far in eradicating this problem.

Penang, with an aim to reduce plastic wastes sent to our landfill, has taken the lead to launch **'No Free Plastic Bag Day'** since year 2009, **'No Plastic Bag' on Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday** as well as **no straw by default** since year 2019. Penang is also the first state to ban the use of Styrofoam. In 2016, the Penang State Government had launched the **Waste Segregation at Source Policy** and last year, we organised the Penang International Green Conference & Exhibition and Eco Power Run IV – I Green PENANG Run 2019. We have worked with vendors to serve drinks in edible cups made from seaweed as a movement to replace single use plastic cups during mega events. I believe that this, amongst other initiatives, is a key to start mass education to effect behavioural change and to inculcate a culture of circular thinking in designing products using the bio loops.

Besides that, Penang also achieved the highest recycling rate in Malaysia at 46.61% in 2019 and we will strive to improve further especially when it concerns our **Segregation of Waste at Source Policy**.

Having said that, I hope the EU experts can share with us more on how we can create a circular plastics economy for Penang today. I am eager to listen to creative, innovative and impactful suggestions that I can implement with my team. I am also confident that our Malaysian stakeholders today will immensely benefit from the knowledge transfer by our EU experts, networking and deliberating on how we can collectively design and collaborate on this timely Circular Cities pilot projects.

With that, I wish you all a very productive stakeholder consultation. I am most excited to see how the progress of the collaboration with our EU counterparts will transpire in years to come!

Thank you and please stay safe!

Chow Kon Yeow