

## FOCUS

### Promoting Environmental Protection and Socially Responsible Investment as a Green Pioneer

#### Interview with Mr Anthony Cheung, Honorary Treasurer, Friends of the Earth (HK) Charity Limited

Mr Anthony Cheung is a visionary investor with experience in Asia and emerging market equities, ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) and socially responsible investment (SRI).<sup>1</sup> In 2017, Anthony participated in a sustainability course at the University of Cambridge in the UK where he met three Board Governors of Friends of the Earth (HK) Charity Limited (FoE (HK)). As an investment expert, Anthony has always believed that SRI and green finance are the global trends, and there are also many earth-friendly investment opportunities. On that occasion, he learnt that FoE (HK) was not only focusing on traditional environment and conservation initiatives, but also exploring the promotion of green finance in Hong Kong which is in line with his interest and vision.

The Board of Governors of FoE (HK) consists of twelve members. Some senior Board Governors have served the organization for over two decades. In recent years, they have been actively seeking for new blood from different sectors to join the Board and support the organization's development. After meeting the FoE (HK) Governors in the UK, Anthony further grew to discover the enthusiasm, innovation and open-minded culture of the Board. Eventually in 2018, he accepted the invitation to become a Board Governor and has been very much involved in the governance and new initiatives of this green organization.

FoE (HK) has been established in Hong Kong for over 35 years. It is one of the leading local environmental advocates and has been engaging the government, corporates and the community, to act responsibly and create environmentally sustainable public policies, business practices and personal lifestyles. In order to promote carbon reduction and respond to climate risks more proactively, FoE (HK) launched the Green Finance Connect Series in 2019, a campaign to encourage policy makers, companies and NGOs to incorporate sustainability and environmental considerations when making investment and financial decisions. Furthermore, FoE (HK) pledged to fully adopt the Principles of Responsible Ownership issued by the Securities and Futures Commission,<sup>2</sup> and became the first NGO in Hong Kong adopting the principles and disclosing their investment on sustainable financial products. In addition, Anthony revamped FoE (HK)'s investment governance and put forward a new investment policy for FoE (HK) with a focus on green and responsible investing.

As the Honorary Treasurer of FoE (HK), Anthony believes there are three key elements to financial governance best practice for NGOs. To begin with, board members and staff should share common goals and build consensus on its resource allocation. Additionally, effective budgeting should provide flexibility to allocate extra resources for new services in response to the changing needs of the society. Most importantly, to achieve financial sustainability, NGOs should ensure stable income from ethical investments so as to serve the society in the long run.

Anthony recognizes that NGOs in foreign countries have played an important role in promoting green finance which local NGOs can learn from. The past year has been a milestone for both Anthony and FoE (HK) and they hope to see further breakthroughs among the NGOs in Hong Kong. With his championship, FoE (HK) has established a clear roadmap, and advocated with various stakeholders about the importance of finance for environmental and social good. FoE (HK) has already made immense efforts including, as examples, creation of the first Green Finance blog in Hong Kong and cooperation with the Hong Kong Polytechnic University to incubate green finance talents. Looking ahead, Anthony will continue to uphold the vision of FoE (HK) and promote sustainability and green finance. Anthony expects that Hong Kong will catch up with the global development of SRI as the public becomes more aware of the environmental challenges and social changes.

Anthony brought his passion, investment expertise and vision in SRI to FoE (HK)'s Board. In response to his role as a Board Governor, he joyfully replied "It's fun to serve!"



Anthony (the 4<sup>th</sup> from the left) moderated the panel discussion in the "Green Finance Connect" launch ceremony.



Anthony shared his insights on ESG investing at the "Business Leader Sharing Series" seminar.

<sup>1</sup> Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI). Definition of responsible investment. URL: <https://www.unpri.org/pri/an-introduction-to-responsible-investment/what-is-responsible-investment>

<sup>2</sup> Securities and Futures Commission. (2016). Principles of responsible ownership. URL: <https://www.sfc.hk/web/EN/rules-and-standards/principles-of-responsible-ownership.html>