For consideration
on 8 January 2001

**Legislative Council Panel on Information Technology
and Broadcasting**

**Establishment of a
Computer Emergency Response Centre in Hong Kong**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the latest development about the establishment of a Computer Emergency Response Centre (CERC) in Hong Kong.

Background

2. On 12 June 2000, the Administration briefed Members on the common security hazards posed by computer viruses, hacking and other security intrusion activities, and preventive measures that the Government has taken to protect its computer systems and networks. Members were also briefed on the need for the establishment of a CERC in Hong Kong and its possible mode of operation.

3. In June 2000, the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) was granted $1.2 million from the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) to conduct a study to examine the mode of operation of CERC overseas and to organise a series of seminars to promote information security. The HKPC has visited the CERCs in six countries, namely, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Singapore, the UK and the US. It has also contacted the CERC organisations in Canada and Australia to gather additional information on CERC in these two countries. The study findings were submitted to the ITF Information Technology Projects Vetting Committee for consideration. Subsequently, the HKPC submitted a proposal to the ITF to establish a CERC in Hong Kong. The proposal was approved in December 2000.

HKPC's Proposal

Objectives

4.　　The objectives of the local CERC to be established by HKPC are -

(a) to serve as a focal point in Hong Kong for computer security incident reporting and response;

(b) to raise the awareness of computer security issue and to promote international standards and practices;

(c) to help improve the security of computer systems and the prevention of computer security related incidents;

(d) to assist and coordinate recovery actions for computer security incidents; and

(e) to maintain connection with overseas CERC organisations to facilitate cooperation and coordination.

Functions

5.　　Functioning as a one-stop centre for computer security incident response, the major functions of the local CERC will include -

(a) broadcasting computer security alerts and advisories through a dedicated website and other appropriate channels;

(b) handling computer security incident reports and providing assistance in recovery actions;

(c) disseminating security-related technical information and materials through its website, newsletters and reports and recommending preventive and intrusion detection tools against security incidents;

(d) promoting security awareness through seminars and workshops;

(e) collating incident report statistics and summary report; and

(f) collaborating with tertiary institutions, computer vendors, information service providers and other CERCs in identifying solutions to security incidents.

Organisation

6.   The local CERC to be established by the HKPC will be staffed by a Centre Manager who will assume the overall responsibility of its operations; two technical consultants to provide the necessary technical expertise; and a response team with 3-4 core staff to take care of the day-to-day operations of the CERC.   A Steering Committee will be formed to set directions and guidelines for the CERC and to review its achievements against targets set.   Members of the Steering Committee will comprise representatives from the HKPC, the Information Technology Services Department and the Hong Kong Police Force of the Government, the Joint Universities Computer Centre, as well as trade and professional organisations such as the Hong Kong Computer Society, the Hong Kong Information Technology Federation, the Hong Kong Internet Service Providers Association and the Hong Kong Law Society.   In addition, a Board of Advisors will be formed to provide expert advice on computer security issues, and assistance to be offered during security incidents.

Collaboration with Academic and Industry Organisations

7.   The HKPC has solicited support from the Chinese University of Hong Kong to act as the project consultant in the establishment of the CERC.   Moreover, nine local companies/organisations[1] have agreed to serve in the Board of Advisors.   The HKPC will continue to actively solicit the participation of other trade and professional associations, universities and information technology vendors in the Steering Committee and the Board of Advisors of CERC.

Funding

8.   The ITF has granted $10.744 million to the HKPC to establish the CERC and sustain its operations for three years.   After two years' operation, the HKPC will review the work accomplished and work out the future mode of operation of the CERC.

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[1]   They are C&T Holding, Internet Security & PKI Applications Centre of the City University of Hong Kong, ICSA.net, RSA Security, Symantec Corporation, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Top Domain Network, Trend Micro and Yui Kee Computing

Implementation Plan

9.   The CERC will be officially launched in February 2001. The HKPC will organise publicity activities in collaboration with the Government on the establishment of the CERC, including a press conference cum half-day symposium with local and overseas speakers on information security, an episode on computer security and the CERC to be shown in the "IT Files II" RTHK television programme, an announcement of public interest to be broadcast on local television, a dedicated booth for the CERC in the 4th Information Infrastructure Exposition to be co-organized by the Information Technology broadcasting Bureau and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council to be held in February 2001, and radio announcement and special newspaper supplement.

10.   The CERC will start to publish alerts and provide incident reporting by February 2001, and publish security guidelines and provide other services by mid-2001. It will also conduct seminars and briefings on an on-going basis to increase the awareness of the community on computer security.

Information Technology and Broadcasting Bureau
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