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BY FAX

Clerk to Panel
LegCo Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn.: Ms Polly Yeung)

Dear Ms Yeung,

**LegCo Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting
Meeting on 9 July 2001**

At the captioned meeting, the Panel discussed, among other things, the subject of Digital Divide. There were comments in respect of the response of the Hong Kong Association of Banks and the Deposit Taking Companies Association to the suggestions to provide automatic teller machines (ATMs) for use by the blind and prohibit banks from charging the blind for using counter services. The Administration undertook to follow up with the two associations. The progress is now set out below for Members' information.

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority has written to the Hong Kong Association of Banks and the Deposit Taking Companies Association requesting them to consider the suggestions. The Hong Kong Association of Banks responded that banks in Hong Kong had for many years been conscious of the need to make banking services readily available and accessible to persons with a disability, and the use of phone banking had improved the accessibility of banking services for visually

impaired, other physically disabled groups and those who were house-bound.

Moreover, the Hong Kong Association of Banks noted that its Code of Banking Practice had contained equal opportunity guidelines and it had made continuous efforts to improve the guideline on banking for the visually impaired to make it more comprehensive. The Association was currently consulting the Equal Opportunities Commission on the revised guideline and intended to issue it in the near future. In collaboration with the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Association is also exploring ways to enhance the accessibility of ATMs for people with a disability. As regards the issue of fees and charges for counter services, the Association noted that such fees and charges were not common among banks and it understood that at least one bank had waived fees to recipients of Government disability allowances.

The Deposit Taking Companies Association also responded that most of its members had agreed to consider the suggestions to improve the accessibility of e-banking facilities and services to customers with disabilities and the elderly.

We will continue to keep the Panel informed of the development of the subject.

Yours sincerely

(Miss Adeline Wong)
for Secretary for Information Technology
and Broadcasting