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Speaking Notes of Mr. Robert Tsoi, REDA's representative, at a LegCo Panel for Manpower meeting (23 January 2003) on the subject of the Implementation of a Registration Scheme for Construction Workers

- The purpose of a registration scheme for construction workers is to provide a framework to enable the planning of manpower supply in the construction industry and the systematic upgrading of the skills of construction workers. The long-term goal is that through this scheme the quality of construction workers in Hong Kong will be ensured and their status recognized by the community. In order that such a scheme can function well, it is important to establish a set of requirements for registration that is acceptable to all the concerned parties, from clients to workers, and will be respected industry-wide as an appropriate standard. Apart from regaining the public's confidence in the industry, the scheme would also help to stem out illegal workers in the industry.
- Through the efforts of the Working Group on Registration of Construction Workers, a consensus has been reached amongst all parties concerning the transitional and provisional registration arrangement for the workers who have substantial work experience but do not possess the requisite qualifications. In response to concerns for the welfare of the senior workers in the industry who have attained a status of seniority and skills through decades of involvement and accumulation of experience, a channel for the exemption for this group of workers have also been confirmed.
- This set of arrangements is the direct result of a thorough debate and discussion among various parties and it has the support of REDA as we believe that this is a consensus that has taken into account the interests and concerns of all stakeholders in the industry.
- Under the proposed scheme, not only would veteran workers be given the opportunity to attain the necessary qualification within a certain period of time, "the older" craftsmen would also be exempted from the trade test once and for all. We believe it is the most practical arrangement being able to minimize the disruption to the industry and avoid causing undue hardship to workers.

- The proposal to lower the requirement for exemption would not be fair to those 50,000 fully-skilled and semi-skilled workers who have achieved their registration through hard work and passing the trade test. It would mean that construction workers without the necessary skills would still be exempted from the trade test and put on an easy path for registration. Such a move can hardly be conducive to our effort to upgrade the skills and thereby the status of construction workers, and improve the quality of construction work which is very much under public scrutiny.

30 January 2003