

For information
18 October 2005

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

**Hosting of the Sixth Ministerial Conference
of the World Trade Organization**

Progress Report

PURPOSE

This paper updates Members on the latest progress of logistics preparation for the Sixth Ministerial Conference (MC6) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to be held in Hong Kong from 13 to 18 December 2005 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC).

BACKGROUND

2. At the Panel meetings on 16 November 2004 and 15 February 2005 (Paper No. CB(1)206/04-05(04) and LC Paper No. CB(1)861/04-05(07)), and the meeting of the Panel on Security on 3 May 2005 (Paper No. CB(2)1409/04-05(01)), we briefed Members on the progress of the logistics preparation and security arrangements for MC6. We also outlined the arrangements for facilitating lawful demonstrations and setting up of a restricted access zone during the MC6 period at the Panel meeting on 19 July 2005 (Paper No. CB(1)2047/04-05(26)).

PROGRESS

High Level Committee Chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration

3. To oversee planning and implementation, a Steering Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Industry and comprising

directorates representatives from the most heavily involved bureaux and departments has been in operation since August 2004. Since July 2005, a High Level Committee to Oversee the Preparation of MC6, chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration and comprising concerned Principal Officials and Permanent Secretaries, has been in operation to provide advice and high level steer.

Hotel Accommodation

4. Assisted by a hotel agent engaged by the Ministerial Conference Coordination Office (MCO) to handle hotel accommodation arrangements, we have conducted a central allocation exercise for delegates. The allocation exercise was completed in late June 2005 and WTO member delegations found the results generally satisfactory. We have now extended our hotel agent's service to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the press.

Transport and Protocol Arrangements

5. WTO Secretariat staff will arrive Hong Kong in early December for the advanced preparations before the Conference. Delegates are expected to start arriving in Hong Kong after the first week in December. All Heads of Delegations (HoD), Ministers of WTO members and other designated persons will receive VIP treatment at the Chek Lap Kok International Airport on arrival and departure. A range of facilitation measures relating to immigration and customs clearance will be provided to all participants. Reception desks will be set up inside the Airport restricted area to welcome the guests. A MC6 information kiosk will also be set up in the arrival hall.

6. Each HoD will be provided with a chauffeur-driven limousine for use during the period 10-19 December. Complimentary shuttle services will be provided to delegates, NGO representatives and the press. During the Conference, the Tamar site will be used as the transport hub for some 400 vehicles related to MC6.

Conference Facilities and Information & Communications Technology

7. MC6 entails a wide variety of conference facilities and information and communications technology requirements, including simultaneous

interpretation, telecommunications facilities, audio-visual systems, etc. The Electrical and Mechanical Services Trading Fund is the Project Manager for the provision of the required facilities in accordance with the specifications agreed with the WTO Secretariat. The Architectural Services Department is responsible for the construction works within HKCEC, e.g. fitting out additional meeting rooms, etc. Radio Television Hong Kong is responsible for event production (for various ceremonial components) as well as host broadcasting.

Hospitality Arrangements and Social Programmes

8. We will take the opportunity of MC6 to demonstrate Hong Kong's comparative advantage and capability in holding large-scale international events. We will engage about 400 government officers and 400 volunteers to help look after the WTO-member delegations; and another 180 language helpers to provide language support in French and Spanish which, together with English, are the official languages of WTO. The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups and Agency for Volunteer Services have provided enormous support to the Government in recruiting volunteers; and Consulates-General and language schools in Hong Kong have also assisted in recruiting language helpers. We will provide relevant training to all these personnel starting from late October / early November 2005.

9. We will also take the opportunity of MC6 to showcase Hong Kong as Asia's world city and a tourist destination. Apart from the HoD/ministerial dinner to be held on 13 December in Grand Hyatt Hotel, social programmes have been developed with the assistance of Hong Kong Tourism Board where necessary. These include performances of 'cultural delights' at HKCEC on the first day of the Conference, cocktail receptions for NGOs, spouse programmes, etc.

Closed Area Around HKCEC

10. Based on experience of similar events (e.g. WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle and Cancun in 1999 and 2003, G8 Summit at Gleneagles in July 2005), we expect a large number of local and overseas protesters will stage demonstrations during the MC6 period. While most of these protesters are expected to be peaceful and law-abiding, some may use disruptive or violent methods. Taking into account the fact that Hong Kong is a small, crowded and

busy city, it is necessary to safeguard public safety and public order by setting up a Closed Area around the vicinity of HKCEC during the Conference period by way of an order under the Public Order Ordinance (Cap. 245). The Administration briefed the Panel at its meeting on 19 July 2005. The Closed Area Order was gazetted on 7 October and tabled in the Legislative Council (LegCo) on 12 October 2005. LegCo's negative vetting period will end on 30 November 2005 at the latest and should there be no objection, the Closed Area Order will take effect on 2 December 2005.

11. Only holders of accreditation badges (see para. 12 below) as well as other individuals with a justifiable purpose and have been granted permission by the Commissioner of Police will be allowed to enter or leave the Closed Area during the closure period. Separately, only authorised vehicles can enter or leave the Area during the period.

Accreditation

12. Accreditation for all participants of MC6, including the delegates, NGO representatives and members of the press, is being conducted by the WTO Secretariat and will be completed by 15 November 2005. An Accreditation Centre will be set up on the ground floor of the Hong Kong Central Library and start operation on 8 December to facilitate the issuance of accreditation badges to accredited MC6 participants, including delegates, representatives of NGOs and members of the media.

Liaison with NGOs

13. MCO and the Police have, from an early stage, established and maintained continuing dialogue with NGOs in Hong Kong which may wish to conduct various activities during MC6, for example, public gatherings, cultural performances, demonstrations and processions before and during MC6. MCO also met with NGOs based in Geneva (where the WTO Secretariat is based) in March and June this year. The Government attaches great importance to facilitating peaceful and lawful activities of NGOs, while ensuring public order, public safety and the smooth conduct of the Conference.

14. An inter-departmental committee (comprising representatives from MCO, the Police, the Transport Department and Leisure and Cultural Services

Department (LCSD)) has been set up to process applications from NGOs for the use of LCSD venues related to MC6 activities. So far, upon the advice of the committee, LCSD has given conditional approval to the Hong Kong People's Alliance on WTO (HKPAWTO), an organisation which reportedly represents local and overseas NGOs, for use of two soccer pitches, the bandstand and half of the central lawn at Victoria Park. HKPAWTO is working together with LCSD on various technicalities, including erection of structures, electricity connection, insurance, etc. HKPAWTO has confirmed that it has no intention to proceed with camping in the Park. The inter-departmental committee is processing applications from other NGOs.

15. Another LCSD venue reserved for the holding of MC6-related public activities is the Southorn Playground. Having consulted the Wan Chai District Council, the Government has decided that this Playground will not be used for the holding of demonstrations, but it may be used for other public activities such as discussion forums and cultural performances.

16. A NGO Roundtable, chaired by the Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Technology, will be held on 16 October 2005. Mr. Pascal Lamy, Director-General of WTO, will attend as the keynote speaker. This face-to-face exchange will provide a good platform for NGOs to express, discuss and exchange views on various issues related to MC6. Panel speakers will include academics and representatives of NGOs.

Demonstration Areas

17. One of the major concerns of NGOs is the location for staging protests during the MC6 period, as protesters would like to get as close as possible to the Conference venue. The Police and MCO have identified the Wan Chai Sports Ground and Wan Chai Public Cargo Working Area in Wan Chai North as possible designated public activity areas. On 7 October, the Government met with HKPAWTO and explained to it the pros and cons of these two locations :

- *Wan Chai Sports Ground* – It is close to HKCEC, is spacious and has good facilities such as toilets. However, the running track needs to be protected, otherwise many scheduled school sports days and other sports events to be held after MC6 will be affected.

- *Wan Chai Public Cargo Working Area* – It is close to HKCEC and has a good view of HKCEC. However, suitable safety measures have to be put in place in view that it is at the waterfront.

The reaction from HKPAWTO to the two proposed sites is positive. Site visits will be conducted and detailed arrangements will be worked out.

First Day Arrangements

18. We anticipate that on the first day of MC6 (i.e. Tuesday, 13 December), participants will converge at HKCEC more or less at the same time and protesters may also be attracted to gather in the vicinity of HKCEC. To alleviate the traffic load on that day, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) has advised schools (particularly those schools on the Hong Kong Island) to designate that day as a discretionary school holiday/staff development day. Over 60% of the schools on Hong Kong Island (including 76 schools or 94% of the schools in Wan Chai district) have taken heed of EMB's advice.

19. The Opening Ceremony will be held at 3:00 pm on the first day of MC6 to avoid the peak traffic period. To facilitate management of the associated traffic load, we will encourage participants to arrive at HKCEC early through various measures, including hosting a lunch for HoDs/ministers, organising cultural delights, holding guided tours within HKCEC, etc. Nearer the time of the Conference, the Government will announce to the public the temporary traffic arrangements to be put in place during the MC6 period. In addition, the Government will also make timely announcements to the public whenever any special traffic arrangements need to be introduced on that day.

GETTING THE WHOLE COMMUNITY PREPARED

20. MC6 is a large-scale international event whose success banks on the active participation and cooperation of all Government bureaux and departments, as well as the support and understanding of the private sector and the community at large.

The Government Front

21. The Government is proceeding with the preparation of MC6 on all fronts. For example, the concerned departments are updating their Departmental Contingency Plans and conducting various drill exercises. Those departments located in the vicinity of HKCEC are devising appropriate measures for their delivery of services to the public during the Conference period.

The Private Sector Front

22. The special security and traffic arrangements to be put in place during the MC6 period may also impact on some businesses. In order to give adequate advance information in this regard to the private sector, we have been conducting briefings for the following:

- firms / shops inside the Closed Area;
- businesses in the Wan Chai North area; and
- other business sectors, such as public utilities, financial, banking, retail, hotels, security, tourism, local and international chambers of commerce, etc.

The Community Front

23. We will also make every effort to provide advanced information in order to get our community prepared. For instance, making of the Closed Area Order will necessitate the implementation of a range of temporary traffic arrangements, including the suspension of the taxi stands, bus termini and stops in the vicinity of HKCEC, certain regular ferry services and two sightseeing tours in the harbour. Transport Department will consult affected parties on details of the alternative traffic and transport arrangements and is liaising with major transport operators in an attempt to minimise impact on them. In addition, departments concerned will disseminate (by holding press conferences as well as through other means) detailed information to the public on the actual arrangements of the Closed Area and the traffic and transport arrangements related thereto well in advance of MC6 to prepare the public for temporary changes to their commuting and traffic plans. Any changes in traffic management during MC6 will also be communicated to the public through

prompt announcements through the mass media.

24. MCO and the Police have also conducted a number of briefings for the concerned District Councils (including Wan Chai, Central & Western, Eastern, Yau Tsim Mong and Kowloon City). Briefings have also been conducted for residents and business organisations in Wan Chai and Central & Western in the last couple of months, and similar briefings will shortly be conducted for the Eastern and other concerned districts.

25. During such briefings, the target audience are apprised of what MC6 entails, special security / transport arrangements to be introduced, etc. in the light of MC6. Organisations are requested to assess their own situation vis-à-vis MC6 taking into account such factors as their nature of operation, geographical setting, neighbourhood and international image, etc. and consider what actions they should take before and during the Conference to protect their own interests. Police has provided and will continue to provide practical security advice as and when required.

26. In addition, a comprehensive public relations (PR) plan has been drawn up to secure the community's understanding of and support for the event. The overall objectives of the PR strategy are:

- to showcase Hong Kong as Asia's world city and a bastion of free trade;
- to drive home the merits of free trade and to highlight the significance and benefits of hosting MC6 in Hong Kong;
- to explain the substance of the ongoing WTO trade negotiations and the objectives of MC6;
- to garner community support for, and tolerance of likely inconvenience caused by special measures designed to ensure the smooth running of MC6; and
- to secure the best publicity for Hong Kong both locally and overseas.

To this end, we have held two media workshops to cultivate the media's interest and knowledge of WTO issues. In addition, we are planning to produce an information pamphlet on MC6 for distribution to the public before MC6. Press conferences will also be organised to apprise the public of finalised arrangements of MC6 nearer the time of MC6.

FINANCIAL POSITION AND SPONSORSHIP

27. The Government has undertaken a prudent approach in administering the use of the funding approved by the Finance Committee of this Council for MC6. As of now, we expect below-budget expenditure for land transport for delegates, air transport for WTO Secretariat staff and equipment from Geneva, computer facilities inside HKCEC, and other consumables, etc. We expect above-budget expenditure for fitting-out works in HKCEC, furniture and equipment for the Conference, and security-related measures. To help defray part of the cost for organising MC6 and engage the active involvement of the community in this event, MCO has also approached potential sponsors for securing sponsorship in either cash or kind. Response is encouraging. Overall, we expect to deliver MC6 within budget.

WAY FORWARD

28. The Government will continue with the final stage of logistical preparation for MC6.

Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau
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