

**For information  
6 December 2005**

## **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON SECURITY**

### **Security Arrangements for the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization to be held in Hong Kong from 13 to 18 December 2005**

#### **Purpose**

This paper updates Members on the security arrangements for the Sixth Ministerial Conference (MC6) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to be held in Hong Kong from 13 to 18 December 2005.

#### **Background**

2. Over the past months, the Administration has sought to brief the relevant Panels of the Legislative Council (LegCo) on various aspects related to the preparation for MC6, including the logistics, security arrangements, setting up of a restricted access zone, arrangements for facilitating lawful demonstrations, as well as the special traffic and transport arrangements. The Panel on Security was either briefed on its own or invited to join other Panels when such matters were discussed on the following occasions –

- (a) meeting of Panel on Commerce and Industry on 15 February 2005;
- (b) meeting of Panel on Security on 3 May 2005;
- (c) meeting of Panel on Commerce and Industry on 19 July 2005;
- (d) meeting of Panel on Commerce and Industry on 18 October 2005; and
- (e) meeting of Panel on Transport on 25 November 2005.

This paper provides a further update.

#### **General**

3. As the host of MC6, Hong Kong has a responsibility to ensure that the conference is held smoothly and safely. We have therefore undertaken various preparations from an early stage to protect public order and public safety during MC6. Our aim is to minimize the

chance of public order or public safety incidents happening during the period, and to be able to respond quickly to contingencies as necessary.

4. According to the latest police intelligence, about 10 000 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. The current public order and public safety threat level for MC6 is “high”, and has been on the high side of the spectrum within the “high” rating for some time, while that for a terrorist attack is “moderate”. Against this background, we have taken the measures set out in paragraphs 5 to 18 below.

#### **Areas for demonstration and activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)**

5. We pay high regard to the freedom of speech and right of assembly and fully recognize the need to facilitate lawful public meetings and processions. Having regard to protesters’ wish to be as close to the conference venue as possible, the Police and the Ministerial Conference Coordination Office (MCO) of the Trade and Industry Department have identified the Wan Chai Sports Ground (which can hold around 7 000 people) and the Wan Chai Public Cargo Working Area at Hung Hing Road (which can hold around 4 000 people) as designated public activity areas for public demonstration.

6. The Hong Kong People’s Alliance on World Trade Organization (HKPAWTO) has also applied for the use of some parks and playgrounds for MC6-related public activities including public gatherings, public forum, cultural programmes and ceremonies. Applications received are processed jointly by an inter-departmental committee (comprising representatives from MCO, the Police, the Transport Department (TD) and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD)). In this regard, in-principle approval has been given to HKPAWTO for the use of three soccer pitches, the bandstand, half of the central lawn and the fountain plaza at Victoria Park for MC6-related public activities, subject to their fulfilment of certain technical requirements. Other applications will also be processed as they come in. Both the Police and LCSD will deploy additional manpower on site to monitor the crowd situation.

7. HKPAWTO intends to hold three rallies on 11, 13 and 18 December 2005. The routes for all three rallies have been agreed between the Police and HKPAWTO. For the one on 11 December, the

route will be from Victoria Park to the Central Government Offices. For the two rallies on 13 and 18 December, the routes will be from Victoria Park to Wan Chai Public Cargo Working Area.

8. Both MCO and the Police have sought to engage NGOs from an early stage. The MCO has been in liaison with both local and overseas NGOs which are interested to conduct public activities before and during the conference period. The Police have also set up a dedicated liaison team to maintain dialogue with NGOs. Regular meetings with different NGOs are being held and we will continue our effort to facilitate their planning of public events during the MC6 period.

9. Apart from facilitating lawful and peaceful public meetings and public processions, these measures are also conducive to maintaining public order and public safety.

### **Conference venue security**

10. In line with the arrangement for international events, the event organizer is responsible for venue security. MCO, taking into account WTO requirements, and in consultation with the Police, has put in place various measures to ensure the security of the conference venue, i.e., the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center (HKCEC), during MC6. These include searching of the venue immediately before the conference as well as implementing an access system for persons entering the venue. This system requires accredited participants to go through security checks at designated check points. Deployment of security guards inside the venue will also be strengthened.

### **Setting up of a closed area**

11. To safeguard public safety and public order in the MC6 conference venue and its environs, the Chief Executive, on the advice of the Executive Council, made the Closed Area (Hong Kong Ministerial Conference of World Trade Organization) Order (L.N. 160 of 2005) (the Order) under the Public Order Ordinance (Cap. 245) on 3 October 2005. The Order was gazetted on 7 October and tabled in LegCo on 12 October for negative vetting.

12. LegCo set up a Subcommittee to examine the Order. The Subcommittee held 4 meetings on 21 October, as well as 1, 7 and 10 November 2005 (the latter three were held with the Administration), and

proposed no amendment to the Order. The House Committee considered the Subcommittee's report on 18 November 2005 and noted the discussion on the Order. LegCo held an adjournment debate on the security and public order issues relating to MC6 on 23 November 2005. On completion of the negative vetting process on 30 November 2005, the Order will take effect on 2 December 2005.

13. The closed area covers the conference venue and its environs, including the HKCEC and its connecting roads, some of the roads leading to the hotels near the HKCEC, the Tamar Site, the areas around the Fenwick and Wan Chai Piers, as well as the sea area around the HKCEC peninsula.

14. The relevant area will be closed from 6:00 p.m. on 12 December 2005 (i.e. the day prior to the opening ceremony of MC6) to 5:00 a.m. on 19 December 2005 (i.e. a few hours after the official closing time of MC6). During this period, only holders of accreditation badges<sup>1</sup> and those others granted permission by the Commissioner of Police will be allowed to enter or leave the closed area.

15. The closed area is very modest compared to the restricted access zones set up for similar international events in recent years. It is less than 1 km<sup>2</sup> in area and will only be effective during the conference period plus a few hours before and after. We believe that the closed area has struck an appropriate balance between the need to ensure public order and public safety on the one hand and the need to minimize inconvenience to the public on the other.

### **Other policing measures**

16. The Police will deploy appropriate manpower and resources to ensure the integrity of the closed area. At the same time, there will also be sufficient policing of areas outside the closed area to protect public order and public safety. To meet the manpower requirements, the Police have imposed a leave restriction from 20 November to 20 December 2005. In addition, where possible, non-urgent assignments (such as training and planning work) have been scheduled to after the conference. Police units may also re-arrange their duty

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<sup>1</sup> In line with the security practice of previous WTO Ministerial Conferences and large-scale international events in Hong Kong, all persons entering the HKCEC during MC6 will be required to present a personalized accreditation badge issued by the Ministerial Conference Coordination Office for access to the conference venue.

shift schedules to suit the policing needs during the MC6 period. Other preparations include improving information technology devices (such as video-conferencing facilities as well as computer software for instant grasp of required information), in order to exercise command and control in a more expeditious manner. Guidelines have also been issued to all frontline officers concerned explaining strategies in handling security and public order events during the MC6 period.

17. The Police will continue to keep the security situation under constant review, taking into account latest developments both in Hong Kong and internationally. In line with established policy, the Police will adopt a tolerant and accommodating approach in handling incidents where feasible and, where practicable, there will be sufficient warnings before any enforcement action. At the same time, the Police will perform their duty of protecting public order and public safety diligently.

18. We fully understand that the security measures and other arrangements for MC6 might cause some inconvenience to the public. For instance, there will be special traffic and transport arrangements in Wan Chai North during the conference period, and traffic in other areas may also be affected. The Police and other relevant departments will seek to inform the public of the special arrangements at an early stage, so as to minimize inconvenience to them, whilst ensuring public safety and public order during the conference period. In addition, we will continue our dialogue with the relevant sectors that may be affected to advise them on the potential risk associated with MC6, as well as the precautionary measures that could be taken to minimize such risks.

### **Way forward**

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

**Security Bureau  
November 2005**