

**Motion Debate on
“Enhancing Co-operation with Macao in
Developing the Tourism Industry”**

at the Legislative Council on 7 November 2007

Progress Report

At the sitting of the Legislative Council on 7 November 2007, the motion on “enhancing co-operation with Macao in developing the tourism industry” was carried. The motion invited Government to adopt measures to enhance co-operation and experience exchange with Macao, with a view to fostering Hong Kong’s long-term tourism development and achieving mutual benefits. This paper updates Members on progress of the measures taken by Government and related organisations.

Exit endorsements under “Individual Visit Scheme”

2. Under the “Individual Visit Scheme” (IVS), eligible Mainland visitor is required to obtain endorsement from relevant Mainland authorities for visiting Hong Kong. As an IVS endorsement for visiting Macao does not allow its holder automatic permission to visit Hong Kong, Mainland visitors with IVS endorsements for visiting Macao only may not be able to make an ad-lib side-trip to Hong Kong.

3. The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (SCED) called on Mr Shao Qiwei, the Chairman of China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), in Beijing on 14 November 2007. At the meeting, he relayed to the CNTA Members’ suggestion on a combined endorsement for visiting both Hong Kong and Macao. The CNTA has subsequently referred this proposal to the Mainland’s Public Security Bureau for consideration. We are advised that the Mainland authorities adopt different policies when processing Mainland residents’ applications for visiting Hong Kong and Macao. As the proposal involves adjustment of Mainland’s policies, the Mainland Public Security Bureau will give the issues further consideration.

Immigration Clearance Service

4. At present, the Immigration Department has set up dedicated counters for holders of HKSAR Travel Pass and APEC Business Travel Card at every control point. Dedicated counters are also set up at the Hong Kong International Airport for holders of "Frequent Visitor Card" (visitors who visited Hong Kong no less than three times in the past 12 months) to facilitate them to complete clearance procedures more expeditiously. The Tourism Commission, through the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), will promote these visitor facilitation measures among chambers of commerce and business visitors.

5. With the continuous increase in visitor arrivals, the Immigration Department is planning on a trial basis to extend the e-Channel service to frequent visitors to Hong Kong, including holders of HKSAR Travel Pass, APEC Business Travel Card and Frequent Visitor Card. This service will also help expedite immigration clearance. The Immigration Department will consider extending the coverage of e-Channel service to other visitors if the trial run is smoothly implemented.

6. Meanwhile, using state-of-the-art technology, the Immigration Department has installed Optical Character Recognition readers at all clearance counters for instant reading of data contained in various travel documents, including the personal particulars stated in "Exit-Entry Permit for Travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao" issued by the Mainland authorities. This service further cuts short the time for immigration clearance.

7. The Governments of Hong Kong and Macao SAR will continue to maintain close liaison to facilitate passenger flow between the two places, and explore ways to further enhance co-operation in immigration clearance.

Training middle and senior management professionals for the hotel and tourism sectors

8. To train professionals for the hotel and tourism sectors, the

institutions funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) offer nine hotel and tourism related programmes enrolling about 1 200 students in the academic year of 2007/08. The Department of Hotel, Service and Tourism Studies of the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (HKIVE), an institute under the Vocational Training Council (VTC), offers some 3 500 full-time pre-employment Higher Diploma and Diploma places specialising in hotel, catering and tourism operation. The HKIVE also provides part-time professional diploma programmes for employers and senior staff of the Chinese catering sector to upgrade themselves in various aspects of management and operation.

9. The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) has relaxed the eligibility criteria for the Employees Retraining Scheme (ERS) since 1 December 2007 to include those aged 15 or above, and with qualification level at sub-degree level or below. The ERB is developing more training courses for different job types for sectors in heavy manpower demands, including the hotel and tourism sectors.

10. Apart from training, we have to maintain our competitiveness so as to retain manpower and attract talents to come to Hong Kong. In his Policy Address 2007-08, the Chief Executive announced a package of proposals to further develop Hong Kong as a regional education hub. These proposals include increasing the admission quotas for non-local students enrolling in local tertiary institutions, relaxing employment restrictions on non-local students, and providing Government scholarships in recognition of the achievements of outstanding local and non-local students.

11. At present, our immigration policy allows all trades and industries, including the hotel and tourism sectors, to admit talents and professionals from around the world to supplement the local workforce. There is no quota or sectoral restriction for employment under the relevant admission schemes for talents and professionals.

12. On 22 November 2007, the Tourism Commission organised the Workshop on Human Resources Development for Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) sectors (the MICEMan Workshop) to provide a platform for leading players from MICE and related tourism

sectors, representatives of tertiary and training institutes, HKTB and Government to exchange views on issues related to the development of Hong Kong's MICE market. Issues discussed included the major challenges in human resources development faced by MICE and related tourism sectors, the provision of training courses at various levels to meet the evolving needs of these sectors, and the strategies in recruiting and retaining local and overseas talent to support long-term development of these sectors. More than 80 participants from conference and exhibition organisers, the travel trades, hotel management, the training institutions and relevant Government departments joined the workshop. The Tourism Commission is now following up the views and suggestions gauged in consultation with relevant Government departments to strengthen the coordination in meeting the needs of the MICE and related tourism sectors in manpower development. We will, for instance, conduct a manpower survey of the MICE sector. We are also seeking support from the market to provide internship placements for students, and are inviting veteran practitioners from the MICE sector to give seminars to students.

13. The HKTB and the Macao Government Tourist Office have established a platform to facilitate regular communication on issues of mutual interest, organise joint promotion of "multi-destination itineraries" and develop tourism manpower. They will meet quarterly for better synergy of their respective marketing efforts. Building upon the foundation of the existing cooperation framework of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Tourism Marketing Organisation, Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will put together resources to further develop the entire Pearl River Delta region into a world-class destination.

Honest Tourism

14. The Tourism Commission is committed to, through joint efforts with HKTB, the Travel Industry Council (TIC) and the Consumer Council (CC), strengthening regulation of the trade, promoting quality Hong Kong tourism products, educating consumers, taking rigorous enforcement actions against malpractices, and reviewing the statutory controls in promotion of "Honest Tourism".

15. Regarding publicity and consumer education, the CC has, in collaboration with the China Consumers' Association, launched a new website, "Shop Smart in Hong Kong", to impart knowledge of consumer rights and protection to Mainland visitors. The website offers tips about choosing inbound tours and shopping in Hong Kong, together with information on local and Mainland complaint channels. The website recorded over a million hits since its launch in September 2007.

16. We will continue to strengthen communication and co-operation with relevant Mainland authorities in combating market malpractices in our source markets and promoting "Honest Tourism". This subject was discussed at the meeting between the SCED and the Chairman of CNTA in November 2007, and the meeting between the Commissioner for Tourism and the Chairman of the Shenzhen Tourism Bureau in December 2007. Both the Mainland and Hong Kong pledged full support to reinforce the current efforts.

17. We will continue our efforts in promoting and implementing "Honest Tourism" so as to enhance the quality of our tourism offerings and uphold our image as a premier tourist destination.

**Tourism Commission
Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
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