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**Panel on Commerce and Industry**

**Meeting on 16 June 2009**

**Background brief on the work of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices  
and the Office of the Government of the HKSAR in Beijing**

**Purpose**

This paper provides a summary of views expressed by the Panel on Commerce and Industry (the Panel) on the work of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices<sup>1</sup> (ETOs) and the Office of the Government of the HKSAR in Beijing (BJO) in 2007-2008.

**Background**

2. The ETOs and BJO, with the exception of the Geneva ETO whose main function is to represent the HKSAR as a member of the World Trade Organization, perform the major function of promoting Hong Kong's economic and trade interests, and strengthening economic ties and cooperation between Hong Kong and its trading partners. The ETOs and BJO also seek to promote Hong Kong's image as an international city, a vibrant and free economy. In conjunction with Invest Hong Kong, the ETOs help to attract more inward investment into Hong Kong and overseas business entities to set up their regional offices or headquarters in Hong Kong. The ETOs monitor the political and economic developments in the countries/places which fall within their respective purviews, and maintain close network of contacts with the governments, legislative bodies, business communities, the media, think-tanks and academia. BJO is responsible for enhancing liaison and communications between the HKSAR Government and the Central People's Government.

3. Since 1995, it has been an ongoing practice for overseas/Mainland ETOs and BJO to report their work to the Panel on an annual basis.

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<sup>1</sup> ETOs include Geneva ETO, Washington ETO, New York ETO, San Francisco ETO, Brussels ETO, London ETO, Berlin ETO, Tokyo ETO, Sydney ETO, Singapore ETO, Toronto ETO, Guangdong ETO, Shanghai ETO and Chengdu ETO.

## **Discussion by the Panel on Commerce and Industry**

4. At the Panel meeting on 17 June 2008, the Administration briefed members on the work of the overseas/Mainland ETOs and BJO between November 2007 and May 2008. Members noted that one of the major initiatives made by the ETOs and BJO in the Olympic Year was to promote Hong Kong as the Olympic co-host city of Equestrian Events.

5. The Panel appreciated the various support provided by the ETOs and BJO in the business trips undertaken by the commercial and industrial sectors. Members highlighted the dedicated efforts made by the HKSAR Government, Chengdu ETO and BJO in providing relief and rescue assistance to Hong Kong residents and businessmen after the mega earthquake in Sichuan on 12 May 2008.

6. Panel members asked whether the Administration could set up an ETO in Taiwan in view of the thawing cross-strait relations. The Administration advised that there was no imminent need for the HKSAR Government to set up its representative office in Taiwan, since the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) had already planned to set up a representative office in Taiwan to meet the service need of the commercial and industrial sectors in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the Administration would keep in view the circumstances to assess the need for the establishment of an ETO in Taiwan.

7. Some Panel members considered that the HKSAR's representation in the Middle East, South America and Russia should be strengthened in order to foster sustainable economic development to the territory. The Administration advised that it was considered appropriate to continue to make use of HKTDC's representation and networks in these places for the promotion of Hong Kong.

8. The Panel noted that the Shanghai Expo was the next major international event to be hosted by the Mainland after the Olympic Games. In this connection, Panel members urged the ETOs and BJO to step up efforts in promoting the Shanghai Expo and in attracting event participants to take side trips to Hong Kong. The Administration assured the Panel that the Shanghai ETO would maintain close liaison with the Expo organizer and relevant Government bureaux and departments for concerted efforts with the Tourism Board and relevant local industries in HKSAR's preparation for the Shanghai Expo with a view for Hong Kong to reaping the maximum benefit from the event.

### **Latest position**

9. The Heads of ETOs and BJO will brief the Panel on 16 June 2009 on their work since their last report in June 2008.

**Relevant papers**

Information paper on reports on the work of the overseas Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices provided by the Administration for the Commerce and Industry Panel meeting on 17 June 2008

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ci/papers/ci0617cb1-1865-6-e.pdf>

Information paper on report on the work of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's Offices in the Mainland provided by the Administration for the Commerce and Industry Panel meeting on 17 June 2008

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ci/papers/ci0617cb1-1865-7-e.pdf>

Minutes of Commerce and Industry Panel meeting on 17 June 2008

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ci/minutes/ci080617.pdf>

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