

**Response to the submission received from a member of the public
in respect of the digital terrestrial television broadcasting**

Construction of the transmitting stations and their stability

Digital terrestrial television (“DTT”) signals are currently transmitted by seven transmitting stations covering 75% of Hong Kong population. The two free-to-air broadcasters are providing reliable DTT service complying with the “Generic Code of Practice on Television Technical Standards” issued by the Broadcasting Authority (“BA”). The ratio of broadcasting hours without fault is over 99% in the past six months on individual channel basis.

2. The Office of the Telecommunications Authority (“OFTA”), Asia Television Limited (“ATV”) and Television Broadcasts Limited (“TVB”) have formed a working group to handle and follow up all issues related to the DTT network development and construction. We note the completion of the permanent transmitting station at the Temple Hill. As for the other stations, the transmission equipment per se is permanent which has been installed at the existing analogue television transmission facilities for the time being, pending the new transmission infrastructure for DTT which is expected to be completed within the coming months. The migration of the permanent equipment to the new DTT infrastructure would not cause any service disruption as assured by the two broadcasters.

3. The OFTA has been in close monitoring of the construction progress via the working group. We note that after a suspension for a few months, ATV has resumed the process of the concerned construction works.

4. Pursuant to the licence conditions, the two broadcasters have to respond to an incident of television service interruption immediately and restore the service as soon as practicable. The concerned broadcaster has to submit the fault report to the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (“TELA”) and the OFTA subsequently. In this connection, the OFTA was informed by the

concerned broadcaster of the specific interruption owing to faulty transmission equipment at the Mount Nicholson station in early May. The OFTA has requested both broadcasters to improve the fault handling procedures, including enhancement of relevant spare equipment and public notification mechanism, so as to minimise the impact and inconvenience caused to the viewing public.

The voluntary labelling scheme and technical issues in respect of the DTT reception

5. The OFTA introduced the voluntary labelling scheme to facilitate consumers to make informed choice when purchasing DTT receivers. Concerned suppliers are requested to provide a product sample to the OFTA for conducting a compliance test, which covers basic functional test and a burn-in test for over 15 hours to ensure proper operation of the receiver to be labelled.

6. In early 2009, the OFTA received a complaint about a labelled DTT receiver that captioning could not be properly displayed after powered on for 5-30 minutes. The OFTA approached the corresponding supplier and it was confirmed that the problem involved a small amount of their products. The supplier issued a firmware patch to address the problem on 1 April.

7. As for the other case about “mosaic images” on HD Jade channel, the OFTA has approached TVB for investigation. In respect of the suspicion that the problem was related to the broadcast encoder with firmware upgrade, TVB has confirmed that the upgrade would not affect normal television reception. TVB has advised that the problem might be related to a decoder chipset used by some receivers. Some of the concerned suppliers upgraded the firmware patch for their receivers to address the problem on 2 May. Other suppliers are actively discussing with TVB so as to provide technical solutions soonest possible for their receivers.

8. Like all other consumer electronic products, the DTT receiver should come with a warranty service. Consumers may check with the product supplier for any doubt or problem in the use of the receiver having regard to the warranty service. The OFTA will also follow up

such complaints about the labelled receivers according to the prescribed procedures.

9. In general, we note that “mosaic images” occasionally found on DTT programme channels may be related to unstable signal reception which could be attributed to signal coverage or problem involved in signal reception and distribution through the communal aerial broadcast distribution (CABD) system. If the DTT signals are received via computer, the case may become more complicated depending on the hardware and software configuration of the computer. In case of CABD issues, the consumer may consult the CABD maintenance contractor for assistance via the building management office. The OFTA will also provide technical advice and conduct site investigation for specific case where appropriate.

10. The two broadcasters are expanding the DTT network with optimisation. When the network is fully built, the overall coverage will be further enhanced. Some cases of unsatisfactory picture reception due to insufficient signal coverage for the time being would be improved in due course.

DTT services and high definition television (“HDTV”) programme channel

11. The Government has been adopting a market-led approach in regulating the broadcasting sector. Subject to the Broadcasting Ordinance and the licence conditions, broadcasters can operate their business independently and determine their programming schedule with reference to the audience preference and market needs.

12. The BA is now conducting the mid-term review of the licences of the two broadcasters. Both ATV and TVB will have to submit their six-year investment plans (2010-2015) which contain their programming proposal. Public hearings will be held in June and July 2009. Members of the public can make use of these opportunities to express their views on the services provided by the two licensees.

13. In developing HDTV broadcasting services for only about 17 months in Hong Kong, our licensees are already in a leading position as compared to their counterparts in many advanced economies in the

world. In Hong Kong, on average, a total of 18 to 24 hours per day of HDTV programme are broadcast by the two broadcasters. As far as we know, there are no HDTV programme broadcasting requirements in both the United Kingdom and the United States under the DTT framework, while our existing HDTV service level is well above the required HDTV broadcasting hours in Australia (20 hours per week) and South Korea (13 hours per week).

Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
Office of the Telecommunications Authority
Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority

June 2009