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Miss Flora TAI
Clerk to Panel on Administration of
Justice and Legal Services
Legislative Council Secretariat,
3/F., Citibank Tower,
3 Garden Road,
Hong Kong

30 December 2010

Dear Miss Tai,

**Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services:
Possibility of Providing Annotation Service in the
Bilingual Laws Information System**

At the AJLS Panel meeting on 26 April 2010, Ms Audrey EU asked whether outside contractors could be engaged to provide annotation service in the Bilingual Laws Information System ("BLIS").

We would like to note, first of all, our appreciation for members' interest and support in relation to our initiatives to improve public access to the Laws of Hong Kong. We wish to deliver, as much as we can, a reliable, timely and user-friendly service to members of the profession and the public in this regard. We have, for example, provided editorial notes, where appropriate, that provide some basic background on the provisions, and will continue to do so.

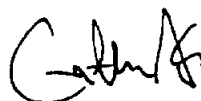
We recognize that an annotation service to BLIS and the future legislation database might facilitate users in their research beyond the written laws into common law. We have been receptive to the idea of a value-added service being provided on the basis of our database, and we

have granted commercial publishers access to the materials in BLIS for this purpose. As a result, value-added annotation services are available for many items of legislation.

However, there are impediments to the Department of Justice directly providing an annotation service in BLIS, particularly when it involves linking to other databases or sources of materials (e.g. case law) over which we have no control. This might compromise the reliability of our system. An annotation service to be provided in BLIS would have to meet the level of accuracy and comprehensibility expected of it and would require tremendous resources in data processing and updating to ensure the reliability and correctness of the service. We have exchanged views with colleagues in certain other common law jurisdictions on this issue and we are not aware of any major common law jurisdiction that provides this kind of annotation service on the official laws website.

Furthermore, since BLIS will be discontinued in just a few years time, it would be impractical to engage an outside contractor to provide the service now. However, we wish to keep the possibility of the provision of value-added services viable, and this is a factor that has been taken into account in the development of the future database.

Yours sincerely,



(Gilbert MO)

Acting Law Draftsman