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Society for Protection of the Harbour

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**Submission of the Society for Protection of the Harbour to the
Panel on Development**

Subcommittee on Harbourfront Planning

Dated the 4th day of December 2009

Re: New Plan For The Central Harbourfront

Government's New Plan An Improvement

Our Society congratulate the Subcommittee on Harbourfront Planning of the Legislative Council Panel on Development ("the Panel") that, through its hard work in holding numerous public hearings over the past few years and passing motions requesting the Government to make improvements to the Plan for the Central Reclamation, the Government has at long last done so.

The new Plan recently published by the Government last month ("the New Plan") incorporated many of the recommendations by the Panel, Environmental Groups and the Public and is an improvement on its previous Plan. However the New Plan still requires further scrutiny and improvements as regards the height and intensity of the proposed developments and land sales to private developers for office and commercial use.

Fundamental Concerns Unanswered

The New Plan still does not satisfy the following fundamental concerns of our Society in representing the interests of the Hong Kong Community :-

1. Why does the Government still plan to provide substantial high rise office and commercial developments on the Central Reclamation (now reduced to 427,000 square metres being equivalent to 4,593,837 square feet) which is not 'an overriding public need' accepted by the Court of Final Appeal when such developments will:-
 - (a) Attract more people and traffic to Central and Wanchai;
 - (b) Worsen air pollution; and
 - (c) Destroy the scenic beauty of the harbour?

2. Why does the Government still adopt the policy of raising revenue from the sale of land reclaimed from the harbour when making money from reclamation is clearly not 'an overriding public need' as required by the Judgment of the Court of Final Appeal?

3. How could the Government justify the above when the only justification for the Central and Wanchai Reclamations it gave to the public and accepted by the law courts as an overriding public need was to build the Central Wan Chai Bypass in order to relieve traffic congestion.

Insufficient Information

The Government has not given sufficient information concerning the New Plan to the public. The Government should provide the following Reports, Studies and information to justify its recommendations:-

1. Environmental Impact Assessment Report;
2. Traffic Impact Assessment Report;
3. Air Quality Study;
4. Any other relevant studies and reports in the Government's possession;

5. The following information in respect of the proposed developments on each of the eight sites set out in the New Plan:-
- (a) The permitted coverage;
 - (b) The permitted plot ratio;
 - (c) The permitted gross floor area;
 - (d) The permitted use;
 - (e) The permitted height; and
 - (f) The total development site area.

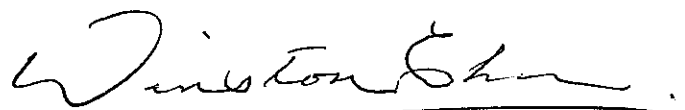
Summary of Reasons for Objection:-

The New Plan for the Central Reclamation now proposed by the Government disregards and/or contravenes the following:-

- (a) The reason for the Central Reclamation given by the Government to the public and the law courts, namely, to relieve traffic congestion;
- (b) The Government's own Policy Statements "to beautify the harbour" and "to reserve the harbourfront for public enjoyment";
- (c) The Vision Statement of the Town Planning Board;
- (d) The Harbour Planning Principles promulgated by the Harbourfront Enhancement Committee; and
- (e) The Hong Kong Planning Standard and Guidelines issued by the Government.

Further Reasons For Objection

Our Society set out in the Annexure hereto the more detailed reasons and information in support of our present Submission.


Winston K.S. Chu, Adviser

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ANNEXURE

A. Government's Public Commitments – Vibrant & Accessible Harbourfront

Government Policy Statements:-

- (a) To enhance the Harbour and the Harbourfront and to make Hong Kong into Asia's world city;
- (b) To make the Harbourfront vibrant and accessible for the enjoyment of the people;
- (c) To preserve Harbour views and to enhance the scenic beauty of the Harbourfront;
- (d) The Central Reclamation is only for the relief of traffic congestion and is needed because there is no other alternative; and
- (e) A policy of “以民為本” (“Government for the People”) to abide by the wishes of the Hong Kong community.

B. The Vision Statement of the Town Planning Board

- (a) The Board's vision for the Harbour is to make it attractive, vibrant, accessible and symbolic of Hong Kong – “a Harbour for the people and a Harbour of life”;

- (b) The goal is to bring the people to the Harbour and the Harbour to the people; and
- (c) To enhance the scenic views of the Harbour and maintain visual access to the Harbour-front.

C. Harbour Planning Principles of the Harbour-front Enhancement Committee:-

- (a) Preserving Victoria Harbour as a Natural, Public and Economic Asset
- (b) Victoria Harbour is Hong Kong's Identity
- (c) A Vibrant Harbour
- (d) An Accessible Harbour
- (e) Maximizing Opportunities for Public Enjoyment
- (f) Integrated Planning for a World-class Harbour
- (g) Sustainable Development for the Harbour
- (h) Early and Ongoing Stakeholder Engagement
- (i) With limited land available around Victoria Harbour, land required for transport infrastructure, utilities and uses incompatible with these planning principles should be minimized, so as to maximize opportunities for public enjoyment

D. Recommendations for Overall Review of Central and Central Harbourfront

- (a) In November 2005, The University of Hong Kong Public Opinion Programme conducted a Public Opinion Survey regarding public aspiration for the Harbourfront and published a Summary of Findings which contained, inter alia, the following key findings:-
 - (i) 81% prefer cultural plus leisure facilities including a large green park rather than more building development around the Harbour;

- (ii) 62% believe Hong Kong does not have sufficient open space and green parks; and
 - (iii) 64% believe Hong Kong lags behind international cities in terms of open space and parks.

- (b) In February 2006, the Harbour Business Forum commissioned another Public Opinion Survey with the following findings which completely supports the above findings:-
 - (i) 88% want to see more greening around the Harbour;
 - (ii) 77% want more promenades or walkway along the Harbourfront; and
 - (iii) 73% want pedestrian access to Harbour at ground level.

- (c) In October 2005, the Urban Land Institute prepared a report on “Hong Kong Harbour- A strategy for Regeneration”. The report suggests that the new Hong Kong Harbourfront needs to be holistic and inclusive. It should embody long-term aspirations, yet be specific enough to serve as a guide for all decision making at the Harbourfront. Each new Harbourfront development should be considered as an activity that serves to enhance the quality and accessibility of the Harbour to the citizens of Hong Kong and should not be looked at as ad hoc stand-alone projects.

E. Decisions of the Legislative Council & the Town Planning Board

- (a) On 5th August 2005, the Town Planning Board in response to a re-zoning application submitted by the Society for Protection of the Harbour, requested the Government to review the planning for the Central Harbourfront.

- (b) On 25th October 2005, the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works passed a Motion that “all reclaimed land should be designated for public use in line with the people-oriented principle”.

- (c) On 17th December 2005, the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works passed a Motion directing the Government to review afresh the current Tamar development project and the planned land uses for the Central Harbourfront, to consult the public before taking forward any further project and planning work, and also to suspend the tender procedure relating to the development of the Tamar site pending completion of the review and public consultation.

- (d) On 9th February 2006, the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works passed a Motion urging the Government to provide the Subcommittee with all the original reports and information on the feasibility studies relating to the extension or reconstruction of the existing Central Government Offices instead of a new Central Government Complex.

- (e) On 7th March 2006, the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works passed a Motion expressing its great disappointment and strong regret that the Government had failed to submit all documents as requested by its previous Motion and urging the Government to provide before the next Subcommittee meeting all such documents and a full list of the documents in accordance with its previous motion.

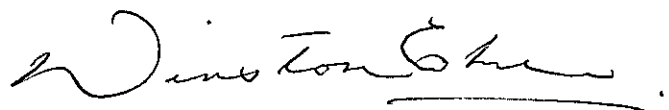
F. Harbourfront For A Thousand Years

- (a) The Central Harbourfront represents the future of Hong Kong. It is vital to get the planning of it right: to create something which does justice to the feelings and aspirations of Hong Kong people and does justice to history and to posterity.
- (b) What is important is that we re-think old plans. What was planned 20 years ago, or approved 10 years ago may no longer be relevant. The community's ideas of quality of life and sustainability have changed in that very short time, and this must be recognized if we are not to end up with a mistake that cannot be easily corrected.
- (c) The aspiration of the Hong Kong community is to limit development along the harbour, and to increase public open space and green parks in order to make Hong Kong an environmentally friendly city.
- (d) Over the past dozen years especially since the enactment of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance and the Judgment of the Court of Final Appeal, the Hong Kong public has taken a different view of the Harbour. The public no longer supports the Harbour being used as a convenient source of land supply and the Harbourfront for building development.
- (e) The Government must not think small nor be short-sighted. This is now the final harbourfront of Hong Kong. We are writing a critical indelible page in Hong Kong's history and deciding on the face of Hong Kong for all times. We cannot afford to get it wrong.

- (f) Hong Kong has the wealth, know-how and ability to create a harbourfront that is economically and socially functional and environmentally sustainable, as well as of high workmanship and beauty that can proudly join the ranks of the famous harbourfront areas of the world.

- (g) We call for a Central Harbourfront Review to engage all sections of the community to update the proposals for transport, land and marine uses in Central and to optimize the mix of open space, areas of greenery, as well as appropriate government, public and commercial developments.

- (h) What we do now will affect future generations forever. There is no turning back and there is no second chance. The responsibility is great because this will be Hong Kong's Harbourfront for the next 1,000 years.



Winston K.S. Chu,
Adviser