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Panel on Economic Development Meeting on 28 June 2010

Background brief on Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation – Tourism co-operation

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation (Framework Agreement), in particular those related to tourism co-operation, and summarizes the views and concerns expressed by Members on related issues.

Background

The Framework Agreement

2. In January 2009, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) promulgated "The Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the Pearl River Delta (2008-2020)" (the Outline), which elevates the development of the Pearl River Delta (PRD) region to the strategic level of national development, specifying Hong Kong/Guangdong co-operation as a national policy. One of the most important tasks in deepening Hong Kong/Guangdong co-operation is the joint formulation of the Framework Agreement as an official agreement between the two governments. The Framework Agreement will translate the Outline's macro policies into concrete measures and serve as an agenda for Hong Kong-Guangdong co-operation. The two governments signed the Framework Agreement on 7 April 2010.

Composition of the Framework Agreement

3. The Framework Agreement consists of the main text and the list of annual major initiatives. The main text contains 11 chapters covering a wide range of topics, viz. the preamble, cross-boundary infrastructural facilities, modern service industries, manufacturing industries and innovation and technology, business environment, quality living area, education and talent,

major co-operation areas, regional co-operation plans, as well as mechanisms and arrangements. The list of annual major initiatives sets out specific measures for the two sides to implement the Framework Agreement during the year. The policies, measures and items set out in the Framework Agreement will be implemented jointly or respectively by Hong Kong and Guangdong depending on the circumstances. Hong Kong and Guangdong have put forth specific policies, measures, and major initiatives in various areas, including tourism co-operation.

Tourism co-operation between Guangdong and Hong Kong

4. Specific policy measures under the Framework Agreement on tourism co-operation between Guangdong and Hong Kong are set out in **Appendix I**.

Developing "multi-destination" itineraries

5. Guangdong and Hong Kong have distinctive and diversified tourism resources, offering ample opportunities for developing more "multi-destination" itineraries. With concerted efforts, the two places can enhance the overall tourism appeal of the PRD Region and step up joint overseas promotion. The tourism promotion agencies of Guangdong and Hong Kong have been conducting joint promotion in many long-haul (e.g. Germany and Australia) and short-haul (e.g. Japan and Southeast Asia) markets through participation in travel expositions and organization of familiarization visits.

6. In 2009-2010, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) rolled out the "Hong Kong Plus" programme, partnering with Guangdong, Shanghai, Beijing and Hainan to promote multi-destination products in the long-haul markets and North Asia. In 2010-2011, HKTB will expand partnership with more Mainland cities.

7. Riding on the "2010 Chinese and Ethnic Chinese Tourism Year" promotion launched by the Guangdong Province, HKTB have joined force with the Guangdong Provincial Tourism Administration (GDPTA) to organize roadshows in the long-haul markets, targeting the ethnic Chinese. In end April 2010, HKTB and GDPTA have launched a series of roadshows in Toronto, New York City, and San Francisco, promoting among 30 million ethnic Chinese brand new thematic combo itineraries featuring the two travel destinations.

8. In view of the commissioning of the first berth of the new cruise terminal at Kai Tak in mid 2013, Hong Kong will join hands with southern and eastern Mainland cities, such as Shenzhen and Guangzhou to develop rail/cruise packages and promote multi-destination cruise itineraries.

Attracting more international visitors

9. At present, foreign visitors travelling in a group, upon arrival in Hong Kong, can get a group visa or 144-hour Convenient Visa¹ to travel to Guangdong Province. To help attract more international visitors to travel to the Guangdong Province via Hong Kong on "multi-destination" itineraries, the Outline has specifically stated that "the facilitation of the personnel movement among Guangdong Province and the Hong Kong and Macau regions will be encouraged, and the '144-hour visa-free measure' will be optimized".

Facilitation measures for Guangdong visitors

10. The Guangdong Province is Hong Kong's largest visitor source market in the Mainland. The Mainland implemented a host of measures to facilitate Guangdong residents to visit Hong Kong, including –

- (a) allowing eligible Shenzhen non-permanent residents and their close relatives to apply group travel endorsements in Shenzhen to visit Hong Kong in group tours;
- (b) making available a one-year multiple-entry Individual Visit (IV) endorsement for Guangdong residents in Shenzhen to visit Hong Kong; and
- (c) allowing non-Guangdong residents residing in Shenzhen to apply for IV endorsements in Shenzhen to visit Hong Kong.

These measures facilitate Shenzhen residents to visit Hong Kong for shopping and leisure, thereby driving Hong Kong's tourism and related sectors and boosting local economy. The Government is in active discussion with Mainland authorities on expanding the applicable area of these facilitation measures to the entire Guangdong Province.

Promoting "honest and quality tourism"

11. The Guangdong and Hong Kong governments attach great importance to the consumer rights of visitors. Hong Kong has adopted a multi-pronged approach in promoting "honest and quality tourism" among Mainland visitors through legislative amendments, more stringent enforcement actions, publicity, trade regulation and close liaison with Mainland tourism authorities. HKTB has also set up designated counters for "Quality & Honest Hong Kong Tours" in Guangzhou and Shenzhen etc. to promote quality Hong Kong tours which

¹ Implemented in 2000, the 144-hour Convenient Visa is a separate piece of paper (not affixed to any passport), which requires that group members enter and exit the Mainland together via entry ports in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen, Zhaoqing, Huizhou and Shantou (applies to visitors travelling to Shantou in tour groups, on the condition that they enter and leave via Shantou).

will not impose self-paid activities, designated shopping or surcharges on tour participants. In 2007, the Hong Kong Consumer Council launched the "Shop Smart in Hong Kong" website to provide Mainland visitors with advice on shopping in Hong Kong. The website has been hyperlinked to those of GDPTA and Shenzhen Tourism Administration etc.

12. The Mainland's "Regulation on Travel Agencies" and the "Detailed Rules for the Implementation of the Regulation on Travel Agencies" Mainland took effect in May 2009. Under this framework which serves to better protect visitors' rights, Hong Kong will co-operate more closely with Guangdong in regulating the travel market and promoting quality tourism products, with a view to rooting out market malpractices stemming from the "zero/negative-fare tours", and maintaining market order, thereby fostering the healthy development of tourism in both places in the long-term.

Facilitation of the operation of Hong Kong travel agents in Guangdong

13. The Central Government, the Guangdong and Hong Kong governments have been promoting tourism development in both places by introducing CEPA (Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement) measures and pilot measures for implementation in Guangdong. Under Supplement VI² to CEPA signed on 9 May 2009, Hong Kong permanent residents with Chinese citizenship are allowed to obtain Mainland outbound tour escort credential. They can be employed by Mainland international travel agents authorized to operate outbound group tours for Mainland residents as well as Hong Kong and Macau travel agents authorized to operate group tours to Hong Kong and Macau for Mainland residents. Separately, Mainland travel agents authorized to operate group tours to Taiwan can organize group tours for Mainland residents who hold valid exit/entry permit for travelling to and from Taiwan and travel endorsement to enter and remain in Hong Kong in transit. This measure aims to facilitate travel trade in the Mainland and Hong Kong to develop multi-destination tour products. In assisting the travel industry to develop the Mainland market, the Administration is pursuing with Mainland authorities the proposal to allow Hong Kong travel agents to operate in Guangdong group tours for Mainland residents going to other overseas destinations.

Concerns expressed by Members in previous discussions

Panel discussions

14. To facilitate better understanding of the objectives, specific measures and co-operation mechanism between Hong Kong and Guangdong under the

² For other liberalization measures under previous supplements to CEPA for travel agency and tour operators, please visit http://www.tid.gov.hk/english/cepa/tradeservices/tou_liberation.html

Outline, the Panel on Economic Development (EDEV Panel) and the Panel on Environmental Affairs conducted a duty visit to Guangdong Province from 15 to 18 May 2009. In respect of tourism development in PRD, the delegation visited OCT East Resort in Shenzhen and the Nansha Wetland Park. Members of the delegation were of the view that eco-tourism in Hong Kong should be developed further to attract more tourists. There was also a suggestion to launch a "multi-destination" tourist pass, facilitating tourists to visit designated attractions in Hong Kong and Guangdong within a specified period.

15. Following the duty visit, EDEV Panel held a joint meeting with the Panel on Environmental Affairs on 15 July 2009 to exchange views with the relevant bureaux on ways to promote co-operation between Hong Kong and the PRD Region in areas of tourism, logistics and environmental protection. Some members expressed concern that Hong Kong had lagged behind Guangdong and Macau in the development of cultural heritage, which might affect Hong Kong during joint promotion in overseas markets. They considered that Hong Kong was losing its edge as a premier destination for travel because it failed to diversify its tourism products. There was also concern about protecting the job opportunities of licensed tour guides and tour escorts in Hong Kong.

16. During the policy briefing at the meeting of the EDEV Panel on 16 October 2009, some members suggested the Administration discuss with the Central Government further facilitation measures for Mainland residents to visit Hong Kong, such as extending the one-year multiple-entry IV endorsement to all Guangdong residents. They also considered it necessary to allocate more resources to strengthen tourism promotions in the Mainland. These members said that the facilitation measures should be flexible enough to allow the Mainland visitors to lengthen their stay in Hong Kong when necessary.

Discussions at Legislative Council meetings

17. At the Legislative Council meeting on 4 March 2009, Members debated on the motion "Actively implementing complementary policies for the Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the Pearl River Delta" which urged the Government to expeditiously redefine the role and positioning of Hong Kong and formulate corresponding complementary policies for the Outline so as to facilitate Hong Kong's closer co-operation with Guangdong Province and promote Hong Kong's economic and social development. Such policies include strengthening tourism co-operation among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau, and assisting Hong Kong's tourism enterprises in operating in PRD region. The motion was passed with amendments.

18. A motion on " Proactively implementing the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation" was passed with amendments at the

Council meeting on 26 May 2010, urging the Government to formulate and implement the specific policies and measures outlined in the Framework Agreement as early as possible, so as to, inter alia, build a modern services base and a world-class modern economic circulation sphere, so that Hong Kong's market and population and geographical scope of services can be expanded to the PRD metropolitan circle.

Latest development

19. The Administration has been invited to brief the Panel on the Framework Agreement in respect of tourism co-operation between Hong Kong and Guangdong Province at the meeting on 28 June 2010.

References

Motion on "Actively implementing complementary policies for the Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the Pearl River Delta" moved by Hon WONG Ting-kwong at the LegCo meeting on 4 March 2009 and Progress report

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/counmtg/motion/cm20090304m1.htm>
<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/counmtg/motion/cm0304-m1-prpt-e.pdf>

Report of the Delegation to Study the Economic Development and Environmental Protection in Pearl River Delta Region from 15 to 18 May 2009 (Chinese version only)

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/chinese/panels/ea/papers/eveveacb1-2253-1-c.pdf>

Administration's paper on "Tourism co-operation between Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta Region" (LC Paper No. CB(1)1952/08-09(01))

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/eDEV/papers/eDEV0525cb1-1952-1-e.pdf>

Minutes of the joint meeting of the Panel on Economic Development and Panel on Environmental Affairs on 15 July 2009 (LC Paper No. CB(1)2534/08-09)

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/eDEV/minutes/eDEVEA20090715.pdf>

Minutes of the meeting on 16 October 2009 (LC Paper No. CB(1)560/09-10)

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/eDEV/minutes/eDEV20091016.pdf>

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<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/hc/papers/hc0107cb2-669-2-e.pdf>

Administration's paper on "Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation" (LC Paper No CB(1)1559/09-10(01))

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ci/papers/cicb1-1559-1-e.pdf>

Fact sheet on "Current Development on Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation" (LC Paper No. FS 22/09-10) (Chinese version only)

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/chinese/sec/library/0910fs22-c.pdf>

Motion on "Proactively implementing the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation" moved by Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung at the LegCo meeting on 26 May 2010

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/counmtg/motion/cm20100526m2.htm>

Council Business Division 1
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《粵港合作框架協議》

第三章 現代服務業

第二條 旅遊

- 一、 支持雙方旅遊企業拓寬粵港旅遊合作範疇。
- 二、 聯合開發推廣"一程多站"旅遊線路，研究開發粵港航空及郵輪旅遊，形成不同主題、特色、檔次的多元旅遊產品體系。
- 三、 共同開拓海外旅遊市場，開展旅遊宣傳促銷，共同吸引國際遊客。有效利用廣東"144 小時便利簽證"政策，簡化到香港的外國遊客入境廣東手續。
- 四、 為廣東居民到香港旅遊及香港居民到廣東旅遊相互提供通關、交通等便利措施。
- 五、 建立粵港旅遊市場監管和投訴處理協調機制，互通共享旅遊市場監管信息，推行誠信旅遊，引導企業和從業人員規範服務，提升旅遊服務質量。

實施《粵港合作框架協議》2010 年重點工作

二、現代服務業

(一) 加強旅遊合作，聯合參加重要國際旅遊展會及大型旅遊節慶活動。繼續以聯合展台形式參加海外展銷會，宣傳推介"一程多站"精品旅遊線路，借助廣東國際旅遊文化節，共同搭建展台，聯合開展宣傳活動。鼓勵兩地旅遊協會、導遊協會、旅行社協會等民間組織建立溝通聯繫機制。