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Ms Sharon CHUNG  
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**English Translation**

Dear Ms CHUNG,

**Legislative Council  
Panel on Development  
Follow-up to the Meeting on 1 June 2013**

At the special meeting of the Panel on Development of the Legislative Council (LegCo) on 1 June 2013, Members requested the Administration to provide a written response on whether it would first consider developing the various types of land as set out in the list of follow-up actions to meet the housing demand. Our reply is as follows:

**Strategy on Increasing Land Supply**

To meet the housing demand and various needs of the Hong Kong community, the 2013 Policy Address gives a clear account of the overall policy blueprint of the current-term Government on increasing land supply to tackle the housing problem in future. The Policy Address clearly stated the guiding principle of facilitating social and economic development and the vision of improving the living space of the people of Hong Kong through increasing land supply. As such, the Government will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to increase land supply in the short, medium and long term through optimal use of developed land and identification of new land for development.

**Increasing Supply of Housing Land in Short to Medium Term**

The ten initiatives put forward in the 2013 Policy Address will help

increase the supply of housing land in the short to medium term. These ten initiatives cover a broad range of areas in increasing land supply, including the following:

- To review various land use zonings for identification of suitable sites for conversion to residential use (such as converting suitable Government, Institution or Community (G/IC) and other Government sites, devegetated, deserted or former Green Belt sites, as well as industrial sites to residential use), and to convert the land where the original intended use is not required anymore for housing or other uses that meet the more pressing needs in the community as soon as possible;
- To increase the development density of residential sites as far as allowable in planning terms (for example, the development density of the residential sites in Tseung Kwan O South has been increased on an appropriate scale previously), and to consider relaxing or lifting the administrative moratorium currently in force to restrict new land sale or lease modification in Pok Fu Lam and the Mid-Levels on Hong Kong Island to increase housing land supply;
- To continue to put into full play the integrated development of mass transportation and residential property (for example, to take forward the planning for residential development at Kam Tin South West Rail Kam Sheung Road Station and Pat Heung Maintenance Depot and to study the development potential of the adjoining areas), to carry forward housing development through the implementation of the redevelopment projects by the Urban Renewal Authority, and to expedite the development projects at the former Diamond Hill Squatter Areas (Tai Hom Village), former Cha Kwo Ling Kaolin Mine, former Lamma Quarry and Anderson Road Quarry, which do not involve land resumption; and
- To review land administration procedures and processes related to land grant and premium assessment to expedite land supply, and in the interests of the public, to expedite the administrative approval procedures and take other corresponding measures so that the approved planning applications for residential development can be implemented as soon as possible.

The objective of the ten initiatives is to step up all efforts to increase and expedite land supply through a multi-pronged approach following the above directions so as to enhance the supply of housing. We will continue to forge ahead and take forward the relevant works to identify more suitable sites to increase housing land supply in the short to medium term, so as to address the on-going tight housing supply-demand situation at present.

### **Long-term Land Supply**

Creating new land supply is an essential source of land in the long term. The Government is determined to develop new land extensively and build up a land reserve so that land can be used to meet future demand in a timely manner. Therefore, the Government will expeditiously take forward a number of long-term land supply projects including the North East New Territories New Development Areas (NDAs), Hung Shui Kiu NDA, development of Lantau Island (including the Tung Chung New Town Extension), developing the New Territories North, exploring the option of reclamation on an appropriate scale outside Victoria Harbour, and rock cavern and underground space developments, etc. These long-term land supply projects will be our focus in meeting future population growth, providing land resources for economic development and improving people's living space and environment.

It should be noted that the above short, medium and long term land supply initiatives are of significant importance in meeting the housing demand of the community and the on-going economic and social development needs of Hong Kong. We can only improve people's living space and environment in the long run through optimising the use of developable land and creating more new land for development. On the other hand, besides providing land for housing development, we should also provide adequate supporting infrastructure and community facilities, address the impact of developments on various areas including traffic and environment, and provide land resources for various economic activities so as to create job opportunities, by way of proper planning.

Therefore, in increasing land supply for development, the Government should adopt a holistic strategy to identify suitable areas and sites for development, determine the priority of utilisation and development of land, and conduct appropriate planning and engineering studies, instead of only looking for vacant or undeveloped land scattered over different areas. On the one hand, these sites may not be suitable for development owing to a number of constraints in infrastructure, amenities, traffic and environment, or it may not be cost-effective having regard to the infrastructure and other ancillary facilities required for development. On the other hand, there is an established mechanism for determining the priority of development of land. Given the limited resources, we have to consider how the resources should be properly allocated so as to develop our land in the most effective manner.

Regarding the different land development proposals mentioned in the list of follow-up actions, our specific reply is as follows:

### **Unleased or Unallocated Residential Land, Roads and Slopes**

In reply to a question on unleased or unallocated government land raised

in the LegCo in October last year, the Development Bureau (DEVB) already made it clear that such areas of land refer to the areas of unleased or unallocated government land under different land use zonings (including the land zoned “Residential”, “Commercial/Residential”, “Village Type Development”, “Commercial”, “Industrial”, “G/IC” and “Open Space”) on statutory town plans (including Outline Zoning Plans (OZPs) and Development Permission Area Plans) (statutory plans). The figures are obtained simply by subtracting the leased or allocated areas under the respective land use zonings from the total areas covered by such zones on the statutory plans, based on statistics as at the end of June 2012. Therefore, such figures are not equivalent to the areas of land immediately available for development or the land reserve.

To facilitate public understanding, the relevant consolidated and analysed land information and the maps showing the concerned site boundaries have been uploaded onto the website of DEVB for public inspection. Upon deduction of land types such as roads/passageways, man-made slopes, land allocated under the Simplified Temporary Land Allocation (STLA) procedures and fragmented sites (sites less than 0.05 hectares (ha) in area), there remain about 391.5 ha of unleased or unallocated government land zoned “Residential” or “Commercial/Residential”. Amongst these sites, there are still a number of sites with irregular shapes (e.g. empty space between buildings, back lanes and narrow strips of land alongside existing developments, highways or other amenities) and they may not be suitable for development. The suitability of individual sites for development depends on a series of factors, such as the adequacy of related infrastructural facilities, and compatibility with neighbouring land uses (e.g. whether the site is too close to existing or planned buildings), etc.

For unleased or unallocated government land with potential for residential or other developments, we will review and assess its development feasibility under the established mechanism. Furthermore, when a plot of land is ready for development, we will make appropriate arrangements, such as allocating it for subsidised housing development or including it in the Land Sale Programme. Some of these unleased or unallocated government sites have been earmarked for subsidised housing development or included in the Land Sale Programme, and others which have potential for development have also been covered by the above initiatives being undertaken by the Government to increase land supply, including being considered under the reviews of various land use zonings mentioned above.

For the suggestion that roads or slopes are also suitable for development, it must be pointed out that although this proposal may not be technically impossible given the present engineering technologies and facilities, such developments on roads or slopes may be extremely close to the existing buildings or infrastructures. For example, a new residential block may be built on the slope at the front or back of the existing building, between two existing buildings, or extremely close to the existing roads or flyovers, which is not suitable in planning terms taking into

consideration its substantial impact on areas like traffic, air quality and noise, etc. Therefore, it may not be practicable to develop roads or slopes.

### **Unleased or Unallocated G/IC, Industrial and Commercial Land**

The various initiatives to increase land supply being undertaken by the Government mentioned above include the review of G/IC and industrial sites. Apart from the 36 G/IC and other government sites, and 16 industrial sites which are going through the town planning procedures for rezoning to residential use in phases as mentioned by the Government, the Planning Department (PlanD) will continue to be on the lookout for more G/IC and other government sites suitable for rezoning to residential use, provided that the provision of community facilities will not be affected. In parallel, PlanD commenced another round of review of industrial land in end March 2013 with a view to examining the possibility of converting more industrial sites to other uses, including residential use. The review is expected to be completed in 2014.

For commercial land, as stated in the 2013 Policy Address, the Government will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to increase the supply of housing land, while at the same time supply more commercial land and facilities, so as to facilitate the further development of different economic activities in Hong Kong. In fact, there is an on-going demand for land for various economic activities like office, retail, hotels and logistics in the market. With the economic transformation in Hong Kong and the increasing number of Mainland and foreign enterprises entering the Hong Kong market, the demand for land from various commercial and service sectors will only be on the rise. Currently, we have no plan to covert commercial land to residential use. We will continue to closely monitor the demand and supply of commercial land in Hong Kong, and actively conduct proper land use planning to meet the market needs and to continue enhancing the competitiveness of Hong Kong.

We need to emphasise again that for the unleased or unallocated government land mentioned by DEVB in reply to the question raised in LegCo in October last year, we have already uploaded the relevant information and maps to the website of DEVB for public inspection of the location, shape and area of the sites. Amongst these sites, there remain a number of them with irregular shapes or being too close to existing or planned developments. For example, some sites are actually empty spaces between buildings, back lanes or narrow strips of land alongside buildings or other infrastructures. Even they are situated at G/IC, industrial or commercial zones, they may still not be possible for development. It is necessary for the Government to continue to conduct reviews of various land use zonings, and take forward a number of planning and engineering studies to ensure an on-going land supply in the short, medium and long term.

All in all, for land with potential for residential development or other uses

that meet the more pressing needs in the community, including the unleased or unallocated government land, we will review and assess its development feasibility under the established mechanism. When a plot of land is ready for development, we will make appropriate arrangements, such as allocating it for subsidised housing development or including it in the Land Sale Programme. For some of the sites which have potential for development, they have already been included in the above initiatives being undertaken by the Government to increase land supply, including being considered under the reviews of various land use zonings mentioned above.

### **“Village Type Development” Sites**

As stated above, in view of public concerns on the unleased or unallocated government land, we have uploaded, among the land information of the unleased or unallocated government land, the map of the approximately 932.9 ha of unleased or unallocated government land zoned “Village Type Development” after excluding roads/passageways, man-made slopes and land allocated under the STLA procedures, to the website of DEVB in October last year. In fact, land under the “Village Type Development” zoning on statutory plans scatters across the territory and is mainly located in recognised indigenous villages in the New Territories. Under the prevailing small house policy, a male indigenous villager at least 18 years old who is descended through the male line from a resident in 1898 of a recognised village in the New Territories may apply to the authorities for permission to erect for himself during his lifetime a small house on a suitable site within his own village. At present, land under the “Village Type Development” zoning on statutory plans is generally within the environs of the recognised villages in the New Territories, and therefore the land use zoning of “Village Type Development” is mainly for small house development by the indigenous villagers. In general, these sites are not suitable for large-scale development because of the infrastructural and other logistical constraints and their sporadic locations. Besides, many of the unleased or unallocated land lots are actually the passageways or surrounding areas of the existing small houses, and therefore not each of them is suitable for development. Notwithstanding this, over the nearly four decades since the implementation of the small house policy, much has changed in the rural setting as well as in the community at large. Having regard to the present-day land use planning and the principle of optimal use of land resources, the Government recognises the need for a review of the small house policy. Such a review will inevitably involve complicated issues in various aspects including legal, environment, land use planning and demand on land, etc., all of which have to be carefully examined. We will continue to engage various sectors of the community in discussion and communication in this regard.

### **“Undetermined” Sites**

Some pointed out that the amount of unleased or unallocated government land mentioned above does not include the “undetermined” sites, land designated

for property development above railway stations and “Comprehensive Development Area” (“CDA”) sites. As repeatedly stressed, the figures of the relevant unleased or unallocated government land areas are obtained simply by subtracting the leased or allocated areas under the respective land use zonings (including the land zoned “Residential”, “Commercial/Residential”, “Village Type Development”, “Commercial”, “Industrial”, “G/IC” and “Open Space”) from the total areas covered by such zones on the statutory plans in reply to a question raised in LegCo. Hence, the relevant information does not include all land use zonings, and the figures are not equivalent to the areas of land immediately available for development or the land reserve.

As for the “undetermined” zones on the statutory plans, they mainly cover those sites which are subject to land use reviews. This zoning is intended to denote areas where further detailed planning study is required to identify the future land uses. For example, the long-term planning of the sites is affected by infrastructure such as railways, trunk roads or drainage system. Technical studies and Environmental Impact Assessments are required for the sites. If necessary, a detailed layout plan has to be drawn up having regard to local characteristics, infrastructure and ancillary facilities (such as detailed design and review of transport networks) before deciding on the suitable land use in the long term, with a view to achieving the objective of effective use of land resources.

To ensure that any development on the “undetermined” zone will not pre-empt the recommendations of the land use reviews, all proposed development in the zone will require a planning permission from the Town Planning Board (TPB). Upon completion of the review, PlanD will amend the relevant OZP according to the established procedures to ascertain the zoning of the site. For example, the “undetermined” site currently located at the waterfront of Kennedy Town has been included in the study area of the “Land Use Review of the Western Part of Kennedy Town” study being conducted by PlanD, and the development potential of the “undetermined” site located at the west of Kung Um Road, Yuen Long will also be reviewed in the “Planning and Engineering Study for Housing Sites in Yuen Long South” which has just commenced.

We will closely monitor the use of all “undetermined” sites, and will amend their zoning for suitable developments as soon as possible after completion of the relevant land use reviews or planning and engineering studies.

### **Railway Property Developments**

As stated in the 2013 Policy Address, the Government will continue to strive to put into full play the integrated development of mass transportation (including railways) and residential property. The planning for residential development at Kam Sheung Road Station and Pat Heung Maintenance Depot in Kam Tin South is such an example. We are also exploring vigorously the

residential development potential of land along existing and planned railways, with a view to making better use of the convenient transport networks and ancillary facilities of these sites to provide more residential flats.

Regarding railway property developments, the West Rail property development projects are taken forward by the West Rail Property Development Limited, a company jointly founded by the Government and the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation for the purpose of developing the West Rail property sites. The MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) is the agent for implementing such projects. Since 2011-12, six West Rail property development projects at Nam Cheong Station, Tsuen Wan West Station TW5 (Cityside), Tsuen Wan West Station TW5 (Bayside), Long Ping Station (North), Tsuen Wan West Station TW6 and Long Ping Station (South) have been tendered out successfully, which are capable of producing about 9 100 flats in total. The Government is liaising with MTRCL to revise the scheme of the property development project at West Rail Yuen Long Station (about 1 880 flats), with a view to tendering the project in 2013-14. For the residential development at Kam Tin South West Rail Kam Sheung Road Station and Pat Heung Maintenance Depot, PlanD and the relevant departments, in collaboration with MTRCL, are conducting studies and technical assessments. It is estimated that the two sites are capable of providing about 8 700 residential flats.

As for the projects owned by MTRCL, being a listed company, MTRCL has the discretion to determine how to implement its own property development projects. MTRCL tendered the property development projects at Tai Wai Station (about 2 900 flats) and Tin Shui Wai Light Rail Terminus (about 1 500 flats) in 2012-13 but experienced unsuccessful tendering. MTRCL indicated in February this year that it would like to re-tender these two projects over the next twelve months subject to market conditions. MTRCL also plans to tender its own site at Area 86 Package 4 in Tseung Kwan O (about 1 600 flats) in 2013-14.

### **“Comprehensive Development Area”**

To expeditiously implement or facilitate developments for the optimisation of land resources, thereby meeting the housing and various other needs of Hong Kong people, the Government has been monitoring closely the planning and development situations of sites zoned “CDA”. The reviews of various land use zonings mentioned above have also covered the development of “CDA”.

According to TPB’s Guidelines No. 17 - Designation of “CDA” Zones and Monitoring the Progress of “CDA” Developments, TPB will conduct a first review of each “CDA” site at the end of the third year after its zoning, and subsequently conduct a review annually. In general, to optimise land use in response to the changing land development and planning circumstances, TPB will propose to rezone suitable “CDA” sites to other land use zonings in the planning process, including “CDA” sites which have completed development, or have



significant implementation difficulties and with slim chances of successful implementation.

### **Short Term Tenancy and Temporary Government Land Allocation Sites**

In general, the Lands Department will grant government sites for various temporary uses by way of short term tenancy (STT), such as for use by MTRCL and the Hong Kong Housing Authority as works sites to construct railways or public housing, for use by non-profit-making organisations, or for various commercial uses (including fee-paying public car parks, open storage, etc.). Temporary Government Land Allocation (TGLA) sites are generally used as temporary works sites of government departments. Such arrangements can help provide short-term support to the trades or services in the community which have demand for land, and ensure the optimal use of land before commencement of their long-term uses.

In considering whether a plot of land is suitable for leasing by way of STT, the Government will take into account the timetable for its long-term planning and development. The concerned departments will also advise on STT sites' long-term planned uses, development schedules and whether they should be leased out again. As for sites currently designated for provision of communal facilities, if no specific implementation plan is available after a period of time, the Government will re-consider the uses of these sites under the established mechanism, including consideration of their suitability for housing development. Regarding TGLA sites which are generally used as works sites, we will consider whether they are suitable for other long-term development upon completion of the relevant projects.

In conclusion, among the measures which the Government is taking forward to increase land supply mentioned above, as one of the measures to increase the supply of housing land in the short to medium term, we are actively reviewing the suitability of various types of land, including the current STT and TGLA sites, for housing development, with a view to achieving the optimal use of land and providing more land for development in the short to medium term.

### **Open Space**

The standard for provision of open space as suggested in Chapter 4 of the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines is a minimum of 2 m<sup>2</sup> per person. In planning for open space, apart from population capacity, the Government will also take into account other important factors, including the population distribution, geographical and historical factors, public commitment, people's aspirations, geographical location/distribution/quality/function of open space, as well as the characteristics of the district and location, etc. During the planning process, the Government will optimise the use of land by planning for open space properly, having regard to the varying factors in all districts.

As mentioned above, to optimise the use of scarce land resources, the Government will carry out studies from time to time in the light of the needs of the society, and is also conducting the reviews of various land use zonings, including the demand for and supply of open space, to make use of suitable land for housing development or other uses. When proposing amendments to the OZPs, the Government will also conduct corresponding reviews to change the land use distribution in the light of the latest situations of the districts. If there is a consensus in the community that consideration should be given to converting the surplus in open space provision (or land reserved for open space) to other uses that meet the more pressing needs in the community, the Government will facilitate in this regard.

### **Military Sites**

Regarding military sites, Article 14 of the Basic Law states that the Central People's Government shall be responsible for the defence of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). According to the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Garrisoning of the HKSAR in Annex III to the Basic Law, if the Government of the HKSAR (HKSARG) needs for public use any part of the military sites, it shall seek the approval of the Central People's Government. The HKSARG shall in return provide land and military facilities at such sites agreed to by the Central People's Government, and shall bear all the expenses and costs entailed. As the sites in question are currently used for defence purposes, the Government has no plan to change their land uses.

### **"Brownfield Sites"**

Regarding the development of "brownfield sites", the Government has been monitoring developments in the New Territories and changes in rural areas. We also conduct timely reviews of land uses in all districts in response to varying circumstances, with a view to achieving the optimal use of rural land and striking a balance among environmental, development and social needs. As mentioned above, the Government is actively taking forward a series of long-term land supply projects, including the various district-based planning and engineering studies in order to rezone suitable land, including under-utilised "brownfield sites", to other uses to release the development potential of more land, taking into account the feasibility in environmental, transport and infrastructural terms. The relevant studies include the North East New Territories NDAs Planning and Engineering Study and the Hung Shui Kiu NDA Planning and Engineering Study (involving about 250 ha of land which is currently used for open storage or port back-up purposes), the Planning and Engineering Study for Housing Sites in Yuen Long South (involving about 93 ha of land which is currently used as open storage, warehouses and workshops), the Engineering Feasibility Study for Kong Nga Po, as well as the Planning and Engineering Study for Kwu Tung South, etc.

The Government is also examining the further development of areas in the New Territories North, and a feasibility study will be conducted with a view to developing a modern new town there of a similar scale as the Fanling/Sheung Shui New Town. We will work in this direction to further unleash the development potential of suitable sites, including “brownfield sites”, in the New Territories for meeting the long-term housing, social, economic and environmental needs of Hong Kong. In parallel, we will continue to actively explore the development potential of Lantau Island, including “brownfield sites” within the area.

As currently there may not be adequate infrastructural and supporting facilities associated with “brownfield sites” to cope with the future population growth or the further development of the district, we have to examine comprehensively the overall development needs and constraints of the district through proper planning, so as to ensure that there will be adequate infrastructural and community facilities in future, and the impacts on the traffic and environmental fronts, etc. that the proposed development may cause to the district can be properly addressed. Conducting a series of planning and engineering studies as mentioned above to refine the land utilisation and mode of development of the district is undoubtedly more effective than developing individual “brownfield sites” and better suits the overall development of the district. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the existing “brownfield sites” include many open storage, recycling yards and port back-up facilities. They provide support services for the logistics industry and create employment opportunities for the local community. However, some of their operations are not suitable for urban areas or multi-storey buildings. As such, in implementing the relevant planning, clearance and re-housing arrangements, as well as land resumption and impacts on the local economy will also be involved. This necessitates thorough consideration and comprehensive public engagement.

### **Land Owned by Property Developers**

Regarding the media reports that five major property developers own about 1 010 ha of farm land and residential land reserve, the Government has no such information on the amount of farm land or residential land owned by individual property developers, their subsidiaries or agents. The private sector is responsible for the utilisation or development of such private land. However, the suitability for development of any pieces of land including private land depends on a series of factors, such as the compatibility with infrastructural facilities, the impacts of the developments on the surrounding environment and traffic, etc.

As stressed above, in developing land, we have to conduct proper and comprehensive planning to ensure that there will be adequate infrastructural and community facilities for the proposed developments, and the various impacts that the proposed developments may cause can be addressed. The Government is actively implementing a series of planning and engineering studies, such as the North East New Territories NDAs Planning and Engineering Study, the Hung Shui

Kiu NDA Planning and Engineering Study, and the Planning and Engineering Study for Housing Sites in Yuen Long South, which involve quite a large area of private land. In general, the Government's mode of development is to refine the uses of various land through comprehensive planning, acquire private land required for development, carry out the associated infrastructure and development projects, so as to provide land for implementation of planned developments.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the Government will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to increase land supply in the short, medium and long term through optimal use of developed land and identification of new land for development. We understand that different stakeholders have different views or suggestions on the development and utilisation of land. On increasing land supply, the Government has considered the development situations of different land and districts, and prioritised the utilisation and development of land on the premise that resources are limited and an overall planning are relatively more cost-effective. Resources have thus been dedicated to taking forward a series of measures to increase land supply as mentioned above, including the planning and engineering studies in various districts, so as to increase the land supply in Hong Kong effectively and continuously.

We would like to reiterate that the Government is committed to increasing land supply and has been monitoring closely the utilisation of various types of land. For land with potential for development, the Government will, based on the blueprint for increasing land supply as mapped out in the 2013 Policy Address, review and assess its development feasibility under the established mechanism. When a plot of land is ready for development, we will make appropriate arrangements, such as allocating it for public housing development, including it in the Land Sale Programme, or allocating it for other uses.

Yours sincerely,



( Tony Li )

for Secretary for Development

c.c.

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