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Panel on Security

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 7 May 2019**

**Administration's preparedness for the approach of typhoon season and
related natural disasters and emergency response**

Purpose

This paper provides background information and summarizes past discussions of the Panel on Security ("the Panel") on issues related to the Administration's preparedness for the approach of typhoon season and related natural disasters and emergency response.

Background

2. According to the Administration, natural disasters that occur in Hong Kong are generally related to flooding and landslips resulting from rainstorms, as well as such impacts as strong wind, heavy rain and storm surges brought about by tropical cyclones ("TC"). These conditions can result in disruption to transport and other essential services, and even inflict casualties. To cope with various types of natural disasters, the Administration has formulated a Contingency Plan for Natural Disasters ("CPND"), which sets out the Government's alert system and organizational framework for responding to natural disasters including TCs, as well as the functions and responsibilities of government departments and other organizations. The Administration also heightens the citizens' safety awareness with regard to natural disasters through publicity and public education.

3. After the issue of the Hurricane Signal No. 10 during the passage of Super Typhoon HATO in August 2017, the Security Bureau has invited all relevant departments listed in CPND to conduct a comprehensive review of their work and coordination with other departments, and to propose measures

with a view to further enhancing their capability and efficiency in coping with natural disasters.

Deliberations of the Panel

4. The Panel discussed the Administration's preparedness for the approach of typhoon season and related natural disasters and emergency response at the meeting on 5 June 2018. Members' major concerns are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

New information technology platform for dissemination of natural disasters and typhoon-related information

5. Members were advised that the Civil Engineering and Development Department ("CEDD") was developing a new electronic platform i.e. the Common Operational Picture ("COP") as a common Geographic Information System platform for the real-time sharing by departments of "incident information" (e.g. landslides, flooding due to heavy rain, storm surge inundation and major road incidents) and "supporting information" (e.g. weather and traffic information, mapping data, etc.) in relation to natural disasters.

6. In response to members' concern about the division of work among various government departments in relation to dissemination of information under COP, the Administration explained that COP sought to complement and enhance the sharing of emergency information among policy bureaux and government departments. It would not replace the dissemination of emergency information by individual government departments. COP would be accessible through mobile and desktop applications in a reliable and secure manner by using cloud technology.

7. Members were also advised that the Police, Fire Services Department, Hong Kong Observatory ("HKO"), Hospital Authority, Civil Aid Service, Government Flying Service, Auxiliary Medical Service and Lands Department would contribute input to the databank of "supporting information" in COP during natural disasters such as TCs, to facilitate the planning and coordination of response actions and enable the departments to have closer monitoring of incidents. A trial version participated by eight government departments had been launched for testing for more than a year and a full version would be put on trial for about one year. COP would be launched by stages. The first stage, during which 11 government departments had agreed to share information, would be launched in early 2019 and fully implemented a year later. COP would be extended to more government departments in the second or third stage.

Interdepartmental table-top exercise

8. According to the Administration, it held for the first time on 21 May 2018 an inter-departmental table-top exercise to prepare for the approach of the TC season. A number of extreme weather conditions under TC situation were simulated to ensure that departments and agencies understood the roles and responsibilities of their own and of one another, heighten their sense of preparedness, and enhance inter-departmental communication and collaboration.

9. Members were also advised that the Hong Kong Red Cross, which provided disaster relief and psychological counselling services, and the Hong Kong St John Ambulance, which provided ambulance support at major events as requested, had participated as observers in the inter-departmental table-top exercise on 21 May 2018.

Flood prevention

10. Noting that one of the major impact of Super Typhoon HATO was serious inundation in low-lying areas, members were concerned about the flood prevention works and measures being carried out at Tai O and Lei Yue Mun. According to the Administration, the Drainage Services Department ("DSD"), the Home Affairs Department and HKO had jointly established an early alert system to alleviate the impact of flooding on local residents in locations including Luen On San Tsuen, Kar Wo Lei, Sham Tseng San Tsuen, Lei Yue Mun Praya Road and Nam Wai. DSD's Emergency Control Centre would be activated when Typhoon Signal No. 8 or above was issued. Actions to be taken included the deployment of contractors to handle blockage at drainage system and the provision of flood barriers and temporary pumping. A series of measures were also implemented to address the flooding problem in Tai O, including the completion of river walls by CEDD. When it was predicted by HKO that the sea level would reach a certain level during typhoon, DSD would erect flood barriers at key locations.

Removal of fallen trees

11. Some members expressed concern about the slow progress for removal of fallen trees after the attack of Super Typhoon HATO in 2017. According to the Administration, Super Typhoon HATO was the strongest typhoon since the 1960s, resulting in many roads being blocked by fallen trees. The major problem was an insufficient number of crane trucks on the part of contractors for the removal of fallen trees.

Latest development

12. Following the passage of Super Typhoon MANGKHUT on 16 September 2018, the House Committee held a special meeting on 4 October 2018 to discuss the Administration's preparedness, emergency response and recovery efforts arising from Super Typhoon MANGKHUT. Members were advised that with global warming, sea level rise and the expected increase in extreme weather conditions, Hong Kong might be hit by typhoons of strengths and impact similar to or even stronger than Super Typhoon MANGKHUT in future. The Chief Executive had tasked the Secretary for Security to coordinate a review of the handling of such strong typhoons. The review was underway and covered, among others, the implementation of contingency response plans, post-typhoon recovery and restoration efforts, as well as the mechanism of coordination and communication across bureaux, departments, public utilities as well as other stakeholders whose work had an impact on recovery and restoration to bring the community back to normal operation.

13. The Administration will provide the Panel with an update on the review of the Government's handling of super typhoon at the meeting on 7 May 2019.

Relevant papers

14. A list of relevant papers available on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
30 April 2019

**Relevant papers on
the Administration's preparedness for the approach of typhoon season
and related natural disasters and emergency response**

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Security	5.6.2018 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	6.6.2018	Official Record of Proceedings (Question 18)
House Committee	4.10.2018	Agenda Minutes

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