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**Subcommittee on Closed Area
(Hong Kong Ministerial Conference of World Trade Organization) Order**

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat

Purpose

This paper summarises the views and concerns expressed by Members on the setting up of a restricted access zone (RAZ) in the vicinity of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) during the Sixth Ministerial Conference (MC6) of the World Trade Organization to be held in Hong Kong from 13 to 18 December 2005.

Closed Area (Hong Kong Ministerial Conference of World Trade Organization) Order

2. The Closed Area (Hong Kong Ministerial Conference of World Trade Organization) Order was gazetted on 7 October 2005 and tabled in LegCo on 12 October 2005. The Order declares certain areas in Wan Chai and Admiralty as delineated as “Land Closure” and “Sea Closure” as closed areas under the Public Order Ordinance (Cap. 245) during the period from 6:00 pm on 12 December 2005 to 5:00 am on 19 December 2005. Entry into these closed areas will only be allowed with permission from the Commissioner of Police. The scrutiny period for the Order will expire on 9 November 2005 or 30 November 2005 if extended by resolution. The commencement date of the Order is 2 December 2005.

Briefing by the Administration on the proposed setting up of a RAZ for the MC6 to the Panel on Commerce and Industry on 19 July 2005

3. The Administration briefed the Panel on Commerce and Industry (the Panel) on 19 July 2005 on the need to put in place a RAZ by way of a closed area order made under section 36(1) of the Public Order Ordinance to, among other things, ensure public order, public safety and smooth conduct of the MC6. All other Members of the Legislative Council (LegCo) were invited to attend

the meeting.

Proposed closed area order

4. Details of the proposed closed area order were as follows -
 - (a) the restriction would be effective from 1800 hours on 12 December 2005 (i.e. the day prior to the opening ceremony of MC6) to early morning of 19 December 2005 (i.e. a few hours after the official closing time of MC6 at midnight on 18 December 2005); and
 - (b) the zone would cover the environs, including the access routes, to the HKCEC. On the land side, it would include chiefly the HKCEC and all its connecting roads, some of the roads leading to the three hotels near the HKCEC, the Tamar site and the areas around the Fenwick and Wan Chai Piers. On the sea side, it would include an area of roughly 3 sq km around the HKCEC Peninsula.

5. The reasons given by the Administration for setting up a RAZ were as follows -
 - (a) the special traffic measures to facilitate public meetings and processions might cause traffic management problems around the HKCEC. The problem would be exacerbated by the sheer number of MC6 participants (around 11 000), plus supporting personnel (around 10 000) and their vehicles. In addition, some of the delegates required special protection. All this would exert much pressure on the roads and traffic control around the HKCEC; and
 - (b) there was a need to ensure the safety of some 300 ministers attending the MC6 and over 20 000 participants of the MC6 and supporting personnel. An accreditation and security screening system would be introduced at the HKCEC. To counter security threats, it would be necessary to have a reasonable buffer zone around and to maintain the integrity of the conference venue.

Views and concerns expressed by Members on the proposed RAZ and the Administration's response

6. Members were generally supportive of the proposal of setting up a RAZ during the MC6 period. In response to an enquiry raised by a member on whether any reference had been made to relevant overseas experience in designating RAZ for the MC6, the Police advised that the scale of the proposed

closed area for the MC6 event was very modest compared to recent overseas large-scale events of comparable nature. For instance, the extent of RAZs for MC5 in 2003 was about 7 km, and that for the G8 Summit held in 2002, 2003 and 2005 were about 6.5 km, 30 km and 10 km respectively.

7. Some Members enquired about the reason for designating the Tamar site as part of the proposed closed area and not as a designated public activity area (DPAA). The Police explained that the Tamar site would be reserved for the use of the vehicle fleet for the MC6 and related logistical needs, including limousines for the heads of delegations, shuttle bus services for delegates, etc.

8. Members stressed the importance of ensuring the secure and smooth conduct of the MC6 and minimising the disruption caused to the normal activities of the community, while taking appropriate action against unlawful demonstrations. The Police assured Members that it would prepare for all possible contingencies and fine-tune its strategy from time to time to keep up with the updated risk assessment nearer the time of the MC6.

9. Members also stressed the need to make timely announcements to local residents and visitors, particularly the shop owners nearby, to inform them of the security and traffic arrangements. The Administration advised Members that it had held and would continue to hold briefing sessions with various affected sectors.

Updating by the Administration on the preparation work for the hosting of the MC6

Demonstration areas

10. The Panel was briefed by the Administration on 18 October 2005 on the latest progress of logistics preparation for the MC6. Other LegCo Members were invited to attend the meeting. Members noted, among other things, that the Police had identified the Wan Chai Sports Ground and Wan Chai Public Cargo Working Area as possible DPAA sites for staging protests during the MC6 period. A member asked whether Hung Hing Road, which traversed between the Convention Avenue and the Victoria Park Road, could also be made a DPAA to provide more space for protesters to hold demonstrations. (The Convention Avenue is covered by the Closed Area Order for the MC6.) The Police advised that it had no plan to do so at this stage, as such an arrangement, if implemented, would disrupt road traffic condition in the vicinity and undermine response actions by emergency units in times of crisis.

Special traffic arrangements

11. An information paper on the special traffic arrangements during the

MC6 period is being prepared by the Administration for the Panel on Transport. The Panel on Transport will decide at its meeting on 4 November 2005 on whether a discussion on the subject matter should be held at a meeting.

Relevant papers

12. Members are invited to access the LegCo website (<http://www.legco.gov.hk>) to view the minutes of and the papers for the meeting of the Panel held on 19 July 2005, and the papers for the meeting of the same on 18 October 2005.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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