

**For Information
7 November 2005**

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

Coverage of the Closed Area

Background

At the meeting held on 1 November 2005, Members discussed, and the Administration explained, the coverage of the closed area. As requested, this note sets out the Administration's explanation in writing.

General

2. We have to set up the closed area to protect public safety and public order during the Sixth Ministerial Conference (MC6) of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The more detailed reasons are set out in the Legislative Council (LegCo) Brief (ref. SBCR 2/1096/04) and the note entitled 'Reasons for setting up the closed area under section 36 of the Public Order Ordinance and related issues'.

3. Broadly speaking, the land closure area may be divided into three main parts, namely, the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) and its vicinity, the Tamar Site, and the connecting roads and bridges. The sea closure area is a buffer extending from the HKCEC peninsula. Physical barriers will be erected along the land closure to ensure that no one will walk or stray into the land closure accidentally. As for the sea closure, there will be a fleet of police launches in the vicinity of the closed area to ensure that no one enters the area unintentionally. In accordance with normal policing practice, sufficient warnings will be given before any police enforcement action is taken.

The closure areas

Land closure

4. The **HKCEC** is the conference venue. The vicinity of the HKCEC like the Bauhinia Square and the section of Harbour Road fronting Phase I of the HKCEC will have to be cleared for the protection of the large number of conference participants and supporting personnel (over 20 000 in number). These areas present obvious focal points for violent protest or wanton damage by radical protestors. One of the major objectives for protestors will be to gain

maximum “visibility”, both to the WTO delegates and to the large number of journalists gathered at and near the conference venue. Hence they will try to get as close to HKCEC as possible. If the immediate proximity continues to be open to the public, we may be putting the safety of members of the public and MC6 participants, as well as public order in the conference venue and its vicinity at risk. In addition, given the proximity of the podium (located adjacent to the Grand Hyatt Hotel) to the conference venue, people could congregate there if it remained open giving rise to public order and public safety concerns.

5. The entire *Tamar Site* will be used exclusively as a vehicle processing centre during MC6. It is estimated that well over 1 000 vehicles will be traveling to and from the conference venue on a daily basis. All vehicles and their drivers and passengers will have to go through screening at the Tamar Site for security verification before they are allowed to enter the conference venue through a “sterile” route. It is therefore necessary to prevent any unauthorized personnel from entering the Tamar Site or the effectiveness of these security procedures will be jeopardized.

6. The *connecting roads* to the HKCEC (Lung Wui Road, Fenwick Pier Street, Convention Avenue, Expo Drive and Expo Drive East) will have to be closed to provide a safe passageway between the Tamar Site and the HKCEC. However, only Expo Drive will be completely closed off, and the other roads will be closed off only to the extent required to achieve the minimum sealed-off passageway effect.

7. A small park along the seaside enclosed by Lung King Street and Convention Avenue will have to be closed in order to tally with the corresponding sea closure area. As these locations are within a short walking distance from HKCEC, allowing members of the public to enter these places would pose potential threat to public order and public safety.

8. Another small area along Fleming Road near Convention Avenue will have to be closed in order to cater for an emergency passageway for vehicles entering or leaving HKCEC. Any blockage of this area will affect the access of emergency vehicles.

9. *Footbridges* with direct access to the above closed areas, i.e. the footbridges leading to the podium next to the Grand Hyatt Hotel from Shui On Centre and the Hong Kong Arts Centre, as well as the one linking Great Eagle Centre and Wanchai Ferry Pier, will have to be closed. Given the proximity of the footbridges to the conference venue, a large number of people could gather on them for a long period of time, if they remained open to the general public.

This could give rise to public order and public safety concerns. However, footbridges not leading to the closed area will not be affected. For example, as neither Great Eagle Centre nor Convention Plaza Office Tower will be included in the closed area, the footbridge between them will not have to be closed.

Sea closure

10. The HKCEC peninsula is highly accessible from the sea. Unlike land areas where physical barriers may be set up in an unbroken line, any sea closure may only be enforced through patrolling by marine police launches. A minimum distance is required to make the buffer meaningful. For the closure arrangement to be truly effective, the sea closure should complement the land closure and there should not be a gap.

11. On the public safety front, as detailed in paragraph 7 of the relevant LegCo Brief, according to presently available information, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may stage sea protests during MC6. To disrupt the conference, protesters may, for instance, try to swim to the HKCEC island to try and forcibly enter the conference venue, or to gain visibility and publicity, the protesters may make dangerous manoeuvres with their vessels. Any dangerous act by the protesters will put the safety of the conference venue and the participants therein, as well as passengers on board the boats traveling nearby, at risk. Hence, we consider it necessary to extend the closed area to the sea side.

Conclusion

12. It can be seen that coverage of the closed area has been kept to a minimum. Every care has been taken to minimize inconvenience to the general public by keeping the area as small as possible. For instance, closure at HKCEC Phase I covers only the basement to the 7th floor, and the carpark below the podium adjacent to the Grand Hyatt Hotel has been excluded. Similarly, the two hotels (i.e. Grand Hyatt Hong Kong and Renaissance Harbour View Hotel Hong Kong), one serviced apartment block (i.e. Convention Plaza Apartment) and the Office Tower of the Convention Plaza near HKCEC will also be excluded from the closed area. The scale is extremely modest when compared to recent overseas large-scale events of comparable nature, when the restricted access zones easily extend to a few kilometers in radius if not more.

13. Having regard to the location of the HKCEC (in the heart of the business district), the closed area is no more than is necessary and proportionate to accomplish the purpose of protecting public safety and public order. It has struck a proper balance between the need to ensuring public safety and public

order on the one hand and minimizing inconvenience to the general public on the other.

Security Bureau
Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
Ministerial Conference Coordination Office
Hong Kong Police Force
Transport Department
Department of Justice

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