1   Internet Society Hong Kong (ISOC HK) believes that the underlying core values and prerequisite for the future operation of Hong Kong's public service broadcasting, in addition to the public objectives stated in the Report by the Committee on Review of Public Service Broadcasting (the "Report"), should be the emphasis on editorial independence and professional freedom.   In order to maintain and adhere to these values, the establishment of an effective yet accountable structure of governance is most critical.

2   We are concerned that the proposed governance model in the Report – with the Chief Executive empowered to appoint all fifteen of the new public service broadcasting company (the "Company") – will overly shift the control of the Company to the executive branch and the Chief Executive himself.   One alternative will be to completely de-link the Company from the government structure and transform it to be a totally independent public service broadcaster.   We propose a gradual and phased-in process to this final goal, with an interim governance structure for the first ten years as in point 3.

3   For the first ten years of the future public service broadcasting, a better balance for community and public involvement in the Company can be achieved in the following allocation of directors' seats:

3.1   Two official members, comprising of the Chief Executive and one employee-elected representative;

3.2   Six industry/professional members, elected from their respective communities, including, for example, media and journalism, education; arts and culture; technology; law, finance and accounting; and social services;

3.3   Seven other members appointed by the Chief Executive, through a similar process as proposed in the Report, via applications and nominations by the Nomination Committee; the Chairman of the

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Company will be appointed by the Chief Executive among those members he/she has appointed.

We believe this structure will guarantee better monitoring of the Company's direction and operation with significantly direct community involvement, to ensure industry knowledge, professional expertise and independence will be present in the Board.

4   We do not agree with and do not see the necessity or justification that outgoing directors should be included in Nomination Committee, as suggested by the Report.

5   Due to the importance of technological changes facing public service broadcasting, including digital broadcasting, the Internet and other challenges, we propose that in addition to the three standing committees recommended by the Report, a Technology Committee should also be established, and experts should be co-opted from the community in addition to board members being included in this committee.

6   We believe the Company should adopt a more flexible principle in exploring new revenue sources, for instance, revenue sharing for content licensing for Internet, mobile and other forms of digital distribution. The Company should take an innovative approach to explore new content business models, including Internet radio, commercial podcasting, P2P streaming, mobile broadcasting, and other opportunities.

7   In order to fulfill the Company's programming objectives for the diversified needs of different sectors of the community, it must not only adopt new and emerging Internet and mobile technologies and applications but also embrace Web 2.0 (and beyond in future) applications – which is signified by the model of public participation and user generated content.

8   Finally, ISOC HK finds no reasonable and acceptable justification in the Report for not considering the option of transferring the current Radio Television Hong Kong ("RTHK") to the Company.   While there are instances and examples of problems within RTHK, including self-censorship and various management issues, there are still vastly more benefits in keeping RTHK – including its staff and its brand – and transferring it into the new Company, thereby maintaining the brand value, world-wide respect, and loyalty from staff and viewers alike.

9   If the Government categorically discontinues RTHK, a negative message is sent within Hong Kong and to the world, and would be taken as an action to curtail press freedom.   Freedom of information and expression, and especially press freedom, is the cornerstone of Hong Kong's economic success and the core value of our society.   Any misguided action that signals otherwise will have severe and detrimental effects on Hong Kong's economy, social wellbeing and international image.   We urge the Government to consider the future of Hong Kong's public service broadcasting with prudence, and transform RTHK into the new Company with an open, effective and participatory governance structure.

Internet Society Hong Kong
June 25, 2007

Internet Society Hong Kong (ISOC HK) is the local chapter of the Internet Society (ISOC), the global organization of Internet users and professionals, providing leadership in issues confronting the future of the Internet, including global coordination, development and cooperation of the Internet, technology standards, Internet governance and online civil society.