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Panel on Commerce and Industry

Meeting on 16 April 2013

**Updated background brief on promoting the development of
the testing and certification industry in Hong Kong**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the development of the testing and certification industry in Hong Kong and the work of the Hong Kong Council for Testing and Certification (HKCTC). It also summarizes previous discussions by the Panel on Commerce and Industry (the Panel) on the subject matter.

Background

2. In 2009, testing and certification was identified by the Task Force on Economic Challenges (TFEC) as one of the six economic areas where Hong Kong enjoys clear advantages and has good potential for further development.

3. Following the recommendation of TFEC, HKCTC was established in September 2009 to spearhead the development of the testing and certification industry and to advise the Government on the overall development strategy and initiatives for promoting the growth of the industry in Hong Kong. A supernumerary Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (AOSGC) (D2) post, designated as Secretary-General (Testing and Certification) (SG(TC)), was created in the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) for a period of two years from 16 March 2010 to 15 March 2012 to provide support to HKCTC in formulating and implementing a development plan for the testing and certification industry. The supernumerary AOSGC post was later extended to 31 March 2014.

4. In April 2010, the Government endorsed the three-year market-oriented development plan¹ formulated by HKCTC with a view to developing Hong Kong into a testing and certification hub in the region by reinforcing the branding of "Tested in Hong Kong, Certified in Hong Kong". Since then, HKCTC has been working closely with ITC to implement the development plan through the following strategies -

- (a) enhancing the competitiveness of the industry by enhancing the accreditation services of the Hong Kong Accreditation Service (HKAS) and raising the professional standard and technical expertise of practitioners;
- (b) targeting efforts at four selected trades (i.e. Chinese medicines, construction materials, food and jewellery) where there were potential strong demand for testing and certification services; and
- (c) promoting Hong Kong's testing and certification services and exploring the Mainland market.

5. In the 2012-2013 Budget, the Financial Secretary (FS) announced that the Administration would step up the promotion of Hong Kong's testing and certification services outside Hong Kong. Two new panels were set up under HKCTC in 2012 to explore with the industry new business opportunities in environmental protection, and information and communications technologies.

6. In the 2013-2014 Budget, FS reiterated that the Government would focus efforts on six selected industries with potential demand for testing and certification services, namely, Chinese medicines, construction materials, food, jewellery, environmental protection and information and communications technologies.

Previous discussions

7. The Panel was briefed on the progress of the work of HKCTC and the efforts made on promoting the development of the testing and certification industry in Hong Kong at its meetings on 15 November 2011 and 20 March 2012.

¹ A copy of the report was distributed to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1529/09-10(01)

8. Members generally supported the initiatives in driving the development of the testing and certification industry in Hong Kong and called for more resources to enhance the industry's competitiveness and develop Hong Kong into a testing and certification hub in the region. Some members considered that the SG(TC) post in ITC should be retained on a permanent basis to support HKCTC's work on exploring new business opportunities and developing new testing and certification services in the selected trades. The Administration was urged to step up efforts in attracting talents and enhancing the skills and professionalism of practitioners in the local testing and certification industry to enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness in the region. The Panel noted that the Administration had been co-ordinating relevant government departments and public bodies in organizing technical seminars/workshops with a view to raising the professionalism and technical expertise of practitioners. Career talks and internship opportunities for university students were also arranged to increase students' awareness and understanding of the industry. On financial support, the Innovation and Technology Fund had provided about \$7.3 million to support the research and development of new testing and certification services in 2011-2012.

9. On the long term strategic development of testing and certification industry in Hong Kong, some Panel members were of the view that efforts should be focused on the testing and certification services in the trades of Chinese medicines and food, in particular services for the nutrition labels of pre-packaged food products. Some Panel members were dissatisfied with the slow progress of the development of testing and certification services in the trade of Chinese medicines and urged the Administration to expedite the pace of development. According to the Administration, testing and certification industry in Hong Kong had already built up testing capability in relation to the safety of Chinese medicines, such as testing on heavy metals, toxic elements and pesticide residues. The current focus of HKCTC's Panel on Promoting Testing and Certification Services in Chinese Medicine Trade was on supporting the industry to build up technical capability to authenticate Chinese herbal medicines by microscopic examination and physicochemical methods according to the Hong Kong Chinese Materia Medica Standards (HKCMMS). As at December 2012, five editions of HKCMMS covering standards for a total of 140 Chinese Materia Medica had been published. The Administration was organizing an inter-laboratory comparison exercise to enable testing laboratories to better assess their technical capability in testing Chinese herbal medicines and co-ordinating courses to equip practitioners with skills to authenticate Chinese herbal medicines according to HKCMMS.

10. On the scope of product testing that could be undertaken by testing organizations in Hong Kong for the China Compulsory Certification (CCC) System, some members called on the Government to strive for further expansion of the scope to cover all products manufactured by Hong Kong enterprises in the Mainland through liberalization measures under Supplement VIII to the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement. The Administration was urged to expedite its work in securing Mainland authorities' recognition of testing and certification results of Hong Kong accredited laboratories thereby helping Hong Kong's testing laboratories capture the business opportunities to provide testing services in the Mainland. Members noted that HKAS would accord priority to process applications from laboratories seeking accreditation to perform CCC testing.

11. Some members had expressed concern about integrity issues that might arise when Hong Kong testing laboratories co-operated with Mainland organizations in testing products. Members were keen to ensure that the accredited organizations, including testing laboratories, inspection bodies and certification bodies, were competent in providing testing and certification service in accordance with international standards of practice with high professional integrity.

Latest position

12. At the Panel meeting on 16 October 2012, members requested the Administration to update the Panel on initiatives to further promote the development of the testing and certification industry. The Administration will brief the Panel on 16 April 2013 on the result of HKCTC's review on the implementation of the three-year industry development plan and consult the Panel on the proposed way forward.

Relevant papers

13. A list of relevant papers is set out in the **Appendix**.

Appendix

Promoting the development of the testing and certification industry in Hong Kong

List of relevant papers

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
17/11/2009	Panel on Commerce and Industry	Administration's paper	CB(1)341/09-10(06) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ci/papers/ci1117cb1-341-6-e.pdf
		Background brief	CB(1)341/09-10(07) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ci/papers/ci1117cb1-341-7-e.pdf
		Minutes meeting	of CB(1)781/09-10 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ci/minutes/ci20091117.pdf
20/4/2010	Panel on Commerce and Industry	Report of the Hong Kong Council for Testing and Certification	CB(1)1529/09-10(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ci/papers/ci0420cb1-1529-1-e.pdf
17/5/2011	Panel on Commerce and Industry	Administration's paper	CB(1)2147/10-11(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/ci/papers/ci0517cb1-2147-3-e.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
		<p>Updated background brief</p> <p>Minutes meeting of</p>	<p>CB(1)1893/10-11(08)</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/ci/papers/ci0419cb1-1893-8-e.pdf</p> <p>CB(1)2960/10-11</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/ci/minutes/ci20110517.pdf</p>
15/11/2011	Panel on Commerce and Industry	<p>Administration's paper</p> <p>Updated background brief</p> <p>Minutes meeting of</p>	<p>CB(1)277/11-12(07)</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/ci/papers/ci1115cb1-277-7-e.pdf</p> <p>CB(1)277/11-12(08)</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/ci/papers/ci1115cb1-277-8-e.pdf</p> <p>CB(1)827/11-12</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/ci/minutes/ci2011115.pdf</p>
20/3/2012	Panel on Commerce and Industry	<p>Administration's paper</p> <p>Updated background brief</p>	<p>CB(1)1298/11-12(07)</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/ci/papers/ci0320cb1-1298-7-e.pdf</p> <p>CB(1)1298/11-12(10)</p> <p>http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/ci/papers/ci0320cb1-1298-10-e.pdf</p>

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1787/11-12 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/ci/minutes/ci20120320.pdf