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Ms. Shirley CHAN
Chief Council Secretary (1)1
Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

By Fax 2869 6794

9 April 2015

Dear Ms. Chan,

**Panel on Environmental Affairs (EA)
Meeting on 6 January 2015**

I refer to the EA Panel meeting held on 6 January 2015 and Item 2 of your list of follow-up actions dated 24 March 2015 which is extracted below:


The Administration to provide information on the "air wall" between the Hong Kong and Mainland airspace, as well as details of regional co-operation on airspace management among the civil aviation authorities of the Mainland, Hong Kong and Macau.

Administration's responses:

At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Economic Development (the Panel) held on 23 March 2015 to discuss the item on "Updates on the Three-Runway System project at Hong Kong International Airport", the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) already provided information on issue of the "air wall", details of which can be found in their paper presented to the Panel and discussed at the Legislative Council Panel on Economic Development on 23 March 2015, paper reference LC Paper No. CB(4) 650/14-15(05). For easy reference, the relevant information is at paragraphs 22 to 24 and paragraphs 33 to 34 of the Annex A to the paper, and now extracted at Appendix A attached.

Should you have any query concerning the above, please contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louis P.L. Chan'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, circular flourish at the end.

(Louis P.L. CHAN)
for Director of Environmental Protection

c.c. STH (Attn.: Miss Pinky Wong) Fax: 2522 2697

Appendix A (extracted from Para. 22 – 24 and Para. 33 – 34 of Annex A to LC Paper No. CB(4) 650/14-15(05) issued by Transport and Housing Bureau)

Recent Developments - PRD Airspace

There has been phenomenal growth in the volume of air traffic serving the five airports in the PRD region (namely, Guangzhou Baiyun Airport, Hong Kong International Airport, Macau International Airport, Shenzhen Baoan Airport and Zhuhai Airport). Since 2004, the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), the Civil Aviation Department (CAD) of Hong Kong and the Civil Aviation Authority of Macao (CAAM) have set up a Tripartite Working Group (TWG) to formulate measures to improve the airspace structure and air traffic control arrangements in the PRD region to optimise the use of airspace and enhance safety. In 2007, the TWG drew up and agreed to the “PRD Region Air Traffic Management Planning and Implementation Plan (Version 2.0)” (the PRD Airspace Plan), which clearly stipulated the short, medium and long term optimization targets and measures to be achieved and implemented before 2020.

The ultimate target of the Plan is to achieve joint airspace planning, use of common standards and harmonized flight procedure design for air traffic in the region, thereby ensuring safe and efficient use of the airspace in the PRD region. The Plan has already taken into account the operational need of our 3RS, as well as the planned development of other key airports in the PRD (including three runways in Shenzhen and an eventual five-runway system in Guangzhou). The implementation of the Plan, which was agreed by all parties concerned, is the basis for achieving the target maximum capacity of 102 ATMs per hour under the 3RS operation at HKIA.

The TWG has been meeting since 2007 to review progress. Some short-term measures have been implemented, such as the addition of entry points between Hong Kong and the Mainland airspace. We will continue to press ahead the implementation of measures agreed in the 2007 Plan through the established TWG platform.

“Air Wall” Constraint

There have also been discussions on the so-called “air wall” between the Hong Kong and Mainland airspace. A more appropriate term is “point of control transfer” (between air traffic control jurisdictions). In the present context, it refers to an arrangement between the Hong Kong and the Mainland air traffic control units to fix a minimum altitude of 15 700 feet for handover of flights between Hong Kong and the Mainland air traffic control units [The handover altitude has been lowered/relaxed from 15 700 feet to 12 800 feet since 2005 for non-peak hours at night (i.e. 1 am – 7 am)]. Given the proximity of the HKIA and the Shenzhen Baoan International Airport, and as they are under the respective control of the two separate air traffic control units in Hong Kong and the Mainland, the requirement for flights departing from the HKIA to enter the Mainland airspace (or for flights entering Hong Kong airspace from the Mainland) at such an altitude follows normal international civil aviation arrangement that seeks to segregate the operations of aircraft in the adjacent airspace, thus preventing aircraft tracks from crossing so as to ensure the safe operation of aircraft. Similar arrangements can also be found in other airports with high traffic volume.

The requirement for transfer of control point is not relevant to runway capacity. The constraints of runway capacity are determined by the time interval and space separation between successive runway movements. In addition, as there is a 10-minute flying distance between the HKIA runway and the “point of control transfer”, the runway operation will not be affected by the requirement of a minimal altitude.