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23 December 2016

Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung
Chairman
Panel on Economic Development of the Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road, Central
Hong Kong
(Attention: Ms Shirley CHAN)

Dear Chairman,

Issues relating to Full Commissioning of the New Air Traffic Control System

I refer to your letter dated 9 December 2016 regarding the letter issued by Hon Jeremy Tam to your goodself about the full commissioning of the new air traffic control system. I am authorised to reply to you as follows.

Ensuring aviation safety has always been the top priority of the Civil Aviation Department (CAD). Before implementing the new Air Traffic Management System (ATMS), CAD had been closely monitoring surveillance data display (SDD) problems of the old ATMS (i.e. frozen/hang-up of radar screens used by air traffic controllers)¹ and had put in place enhanced maintenance measures for optimising the system performance. CAD implemented a one-off system optimisation in 2014, which included the upgrading of relevant SDD workstations and optimising radar signal inputs, etc.

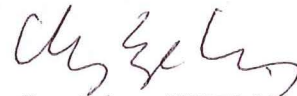
¹ The problems concerned can be solved by rebooting the relevant workstations. For details, please refer to Chapter 4 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 63A.

Since then, the occurrence of SDD problems of the old ATMS had decreased remarkably. Two years before the old ATMS was turned into a back-up (i.e. from 12 November 2014 to 13 November 2016), the system performance had been consistently better than the safety performance benchmark. SDD problems had decreased to about 1.6 times per month on average. The system availability² had always exceeded 99.9%, fully achieving the international standard.

For the new ATMS, since its full commissioning on 14 November 2016, it has never encountered any SDD problem³ so far. The system availability has consistently been above the target of 99.9%.

CAD will continue to closely monitor the performance of the new ATMS and work with the system contractor closely on system optimisation. CAD has also set up an expert panel comprising local and overseas experts in air traffic control and engineering fields. The expert panel will provide objective expert advice to the Director-General of Civil Aviation on teething issues arising from the commissioning of the new ATMS; and share with CAD international experiences with a view to further optimising the performance of the system.

Yours sincerely,



(Miss Sze Ling CHENG)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c. Civil Aviation Department (Attention: Mr Richard WU, Assistant Director-General of Civil Aviation (Air Traffic Engineering Services))

² According to international standard, “availability” is defined as “the probability that a system will perform its required function at the initiation of the intended operation.”

³ The issues with the new ATMS arising from limitations of radar technology and synchronisation of flight data are different in nature from the SDD problems mentioned above. CAD has been keeping the LegCo and public informed of the operational details of the new ATMS through various channels, and is working closely with the system contractor to optimise and fine-tune the system.