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**Panel on Commerce and Industry**

**Meeting on 19 February 2021**

**Updated background brief on the development of Hong Kong's  
testing and certification industry**

**Purpose**

This paper provides updated background information on the development of the Hong Kong's testing and certification ("T&C") industry. It also summarizes the views and concerns expressed by members of the Panel on Commerce and Industry ("the Panel") during previous discussions on the subject.

**Background**

2. The local T&C industry has been providing testing, inspection and certification services to various sectors. By ensuring that products comply with international and regional standards, it contributes to Hong Kong's manufacturing industry, external trade and high-end manufacturing industries advocated by re-industrialization, and has become an integral part of the supply chain. According to the Administration, T&C is an industry with good development potentials. Over the years, the industry has established a good foundation, based on a robust accreditation system, high professional and integrity standards and an excellent reputation.

3. In September 2009, the Administration established the Hong Kong Council for Testing and Certification ("HKCTC") to advise on the overall development strategy of the T&C industry. The vision of HKCTC is to develop Hong Kong into a T&C hub in the region by reinforcing the branding of "Tested in Hong Kong, Certified in Hong Kong". HKCTC adopts a market-oriented approach to promote the development of the T&C sector.

## **Promotion of the development of the testing and certification industry**

### Accreditation service

4. Accreditation is an official recognition of the competence of a T&C establishment in carrying out specific conformity assessment tasks. The Hong Kong Accreditation Service ("HKAS") under the Innovation and Technology Commission ("ITC") provides accreditation service in Hong Kong.

5. HKAS improves the standard of local conformity assessment services (i.e. testing, inspection and certification) and supports the development of the industry by providing a wide range of accreditation services through three accreditation schemes, namely, the Hong Kong Laboratory Accreditation Scheme, the Hong Kong Certification Body Accreditation Scheme, and the Hong Kong Inspection Body Accreditation Scheme. Performance of laboratories, certification bodies and inspection bodies are evaluated through rigorous on-site assessments before they are recognized as competent in performing the conformity assessment activities listed in their respective scopes of accreditation.

6. Through participation in mutual recognition arrangements ("MRA") administered by international accreditation cooperation bodies, conformity assessment results issued by HKAS accredited organizations are widely recognized in over 100 economies, including all major trading partners of Hong Kong. This greatly facilitates cross-border trade with the related economies.

### Premises

7. The Administration introduced the "Nil Waiver Fee" measure effective from 1 February 2016 to facilitate the operation of testing and calibration laboratories in industrial buildings. Upon approval of application, the Government will exempt the waiver fees that would otherwise be chargeable for issuing waivers to allow the use of such laboratories under a general industrial land lease.

### Opening up of the Mainland testing and certification market

8. Since the implementation of Supplement VII to the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement ("CEPA"),<sup>1</sup> the Mainland has been gradually opening up its market to the Hong Kong's T&C industry. The Agreement on Trade in Services signed under the framework of CEPA was amended in November 2019 to expand the scope of China Compulsory Certification ("CCC") testing that can be undertaken by Hong Kong testing

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<sup>1</sup> The service liberalization measures under Supplement VII to CEPA took effect from 1 January 2011.

organizations to cover all products requiring CCC that are processed or manufactured anywhere in the world (including places outside China). This extended coverage took effect on 1 June 2020.

9. Promulgated in February 2019, the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("Greater Bay Area") reinforces that the implementation of CEPA liberalization measures for Hong Kong's services sector, including T&C, will be deepened. It also mentions supporting Greater Bay Area enterprises in using services of Hong Kong such as T&C.

### **Previous discussions**

10. The Panel last discussed with the Administration the development of the T&C industry at the meeting on 27 February 2018. The Panel also received views from deputations on the subject at that meeting. The major views and concerns expressed by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### Promotion of testing, certification and accreditation services

11. Members considered that T&C services were vital to Hong Kong's reputation as a shoppers' paradise and its retail and tourism industries. They urged the Administration to make use of accreditation service to help ensure the quality of T&C bodies, and to strengthen visitors' confidence in the goods and services provided/marketed in Hong Kong, including jewellery, Chinese Materia Medica, health care and beauty products. Members also suggested stepping up Government's effort in promoting Hong Kong's accredited T&C services to overseas stakeholders.

12. The Administration advised that unlike the Mainland, Hong Kong did not regulate its T&C industry. Similar to the situation in Europe and the United States, accreditation was voluntary in Hong Kong. HKAS provided accreditation services to T&C bodies according to international standards, such as the International Organization for Standardization ("ISO") standards. HKAS-accredited organizations were allowed to issue endorsed reports/certificates bearing the HKAS accreditation mark for services which had been accredited. On the promotion of Hong Kong's accredited T&C services, HKAS had already entered into MRA with 100 overseas accreditation bodies. Besides, HKCTC had collaborated with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council ("HKTDC") to promote Hong Kong's T&C services to overseas markets.

13. In response to members' enquiries on measures to assist the industry to develop and promote a certification scheme, the Administration advised that

certain local industries, such as the construction industry, had been making use of product certification schemes to ensure quality of construction materials, and hence enhance consumers' confidence. Such construction materials product certification schemes were usually operated by industry associations. HKCTC had been assisting various industries to promote their certification schemes/industry standards. For example, HKCTC would co-organize a seminar with HKTDC and the Gemmological Association of Hong Kong Limited titled "The Latest Developments of the Hong Kong Standard of Fei Cui Testing and Service Standards of the Jewellery Retail Industry" at the Hong Kong International Jewellery Show on 3 March 2018.

#### Seeking international recognition of Hong Kong's assessment results and standards

14. Members considered that in order to take the Hong Kong's T&C industry to an international level, Hong Kong should take part in the development work of international standards. They pointed out that product and service requirements specified by international clients were stricter than international standards. As such, the Administration should liaise with overseas governments and authorities with a view to fostering mutual recognition on T&C standards developed locally, rather than leaving the specific industries to develop their own standards which might not be recognized by overseas authorities.

15. The Administration advised that Hong Kong had been involved in formulating international standards. While Hong Kong could not become a full member of ISO due to its country status requirement, Hong Kong was a correspondent member of ISO and had been actively participating in ISO affairs. About 170 Hong Kong representatives joined 85 ISO Technical Committees/sub-committees/working groups to contribute to the development of international standards.

#### Manpower

16. Noting that the Open University of Hong Kong ("OUHK") launched Hong Kong's first full-time undergraduate programme dedicated to T&C in 2013, members enquired whether the Administration had any plan to encourage other mainstream universities to launch similar programmes targeted to the grooming of talent. They also asked what measures the Administration would take to enhance students' interest in the T&C sector, apart from launching a teaching kit for senior secondary chemistry teachers in 2016.

17. The Administration advised that apart from OUHK, other universities/institutes including the Hong Kong Baptist University ("HKBU") and the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong set up by

the Vocational Training Council ("VTC") had launched bachelor's degree programmes dedicated to T&C. Postgraduate T&C programmes were also provided by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, HKBU, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and OUHK. The first batch of students of the full-time four-year bachelor's degree programme launched by OUHK graduated in 2017. Among the 120 graduates, around 60% had joined the T&C industry. Besides, about 500 students graduated from the nine T&C-related Higher Diploma programmes offered by VTC each year, among which about 30% had joined the T&C industry.

### Premises

18. Members relayed the strong demand of the T&C industry for suitable premises for the accommodation of testing and calibration laboratories. They opined that the provision of suitable premises to house the same type of testing laboratories under one roof could achieve a synergy effect for the industry. They enquired about the progress in making available land and accommodation for the testing laboratories.

19. The Administration advised that ITC had been keeping in touch with the Planning Department ("PlanD") to ensure that testing laboratories could be accommodated in new development areas ("NDAs"). For example, ITC had made suggestions to PlanD for T&C activities to be included as approved land use in Hung Shui Kiu NDA, and Tuen Mun Areas 40 and 46 and the adjoining areas.

### Monitoring of the testing and certification industry

20. Referring to the incident involving the falsification of concrete test samples by testing laboratory staff working for a government contractor on the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, some members urged the Administration to introduce a mechanism for rescinding recognitions awarded to T&C professionals found engaging in professional misconduct or criminal behaviour.

21. The Administration advised that HKAS had been conducting surveillance visits and re-assessments on accredited T&C organizations. If in the opinion of HKAS an accredited organization had failed to comply with the accreditation criteria, HKAS could suspend or terminate the organization's accreditation.

22. The Administration also advised that there were stringent requirements, including those on integrity management, to ensure the capability and competency of the approved signatories (persons nominated by the accredited organization and authorized to sign its endorsed reports or certificates). If an approved signatory was no longer capable of meeting the necessary

requirements, that person would no longer be allowed to be an approved signatory of the accredited organization concerned.

### **Council question**

23. At the Council meeting of 11 April 2018, Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan asked a written question regarding the promotion of the development of the T&C industry. He asked whether HKAS had proposed to international organizations such as the International Accreditation Forum and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation the adoption of the certification criteria and testing methods developed in Hong Kong to create a brand of "Tested in Hong Kong, Certified in Hong Kong", with a view to building a leading position for Hong Kong's T&C industry internationally, thus tapping new markets.

24. The Administration advised that HKAS had been proactively participating in MRA with different accreditation bodies around the world, with an aim to seeking the recognition by other MRA signatories of the reports/certificates issued by HKAS-accredited T&C bodies. HKAS had also been participating actively in international accreditation policy-making, so as to achieve wider international recognition of the assessment results issued by accredited Hong Kong T&C bodies. For instance, HKAS staff members would attend meetings of international accreditation cooperation bodies, and participate in their committees, working groups and task forces as chairperson or member. Besides, HKAS had hosted a number of meetings and workshops of these organisations in Hong Kong and had contributed articles to their newsletters. All these helped raise the profile of HKAS in the international accreditation community.

### **Latest position**

25. The Administration will brief the Panel on 19 February 2021 on the latest development of the Hong Kong's T&C industry.

### **Relevant papers**

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

## List of relevant papers

Date of meeting	Meeting	Paper
27/2/2018	Panel on Commerce and Industry	<p>Administration's paper on "Latest development of the testing and certification industry"  <a href="#">(LC Paper No. CB(1)604/17-18(03))</a></p> <p>Updated background brief on the development of the testing and certification industry in Hong Kong prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  <a href="#">(LC Paper No. CB(1)604/17-18(04))</a></p> <p>Administration's follow-up paper  <a href="#">(LC Paper No. CB(1)1313/17-18(01))</a></p> <p>Minutes of meeting  <a href="#">(LC Paper No. CB(1)922/17-18)</a></p>
11/4/2018	Council	<p>Question No. 7 on "Promoting development of testing and certification industry" raised by Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan  <a href="#">(Government press release)</a></p>