

Legislative Council Panel on Commerce and Industry

2020 Policy Address

Policy Initiatives of

Commerce, Industry and Tourism Branch,

Commerce and Economic Development Bureau

Our Vision

In the past one and a half years, Hong Kong has experienced social unrest incidents and the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the uncertainties arising from geopolitical tensions, the economy has been hard-hit and business environment has been very difficult for enterprises. With the pandemic still rampant worldwide, and Hong Kong facing a severe fourth wave outbreak, the first and foremost task for the Government is to continue combatting the pandemic and gradually resuming economic activities while keeping the health risks in check.

2. As the Chief Executive clearly pointed out in the Policy Address 2020, to ride out the storm in the trade and economic arena, the inevitable strategy is to leverage Hong Kong's unique advantages under "One Country, Two Systems" to integrate further with the overall national development and to enhance our connections with the world in order to explore more business opportunities. Against the backdrop of promoting free trade and maintaining market economy, we will expand

our reach to more markets together with our businesses, and to assist professional services providers to go beyond Hong Kong.

3. In the course of relaunching the economy, there are three overall strategic directions: the first is to capitalise on the country's external strategy of "dual circulation", the second is to explore markets where Hong Kong's fundamental strengths can be fully utilised, and the third is to assist the most hard-hit enterprises to sail through the storm, helping them with their most pressing needs, facilitating their transformation, and encouraging them to invest in the future. The ensuing paragraphs brief Members on the progress of the policy initiatives related to the Commerce and Industry Panel in the Policy Address 2020.

Assisting Hong Kong Enterprises in Tapping into the Mainland Domestic Market

4. Due to the sluggish US and European markets, Hong Kong enterprises which had set up factories in the Mainland for manufacturing goods for export have encountered difficulties. At the same time, the Mainland is committed to expanding domestic demand with its "dual circulation" strategy, which takes the domestic market as the mainstay while enabling domestic and foreign markets to interact positively with each other. We will endeavour to assist Hong Kong enterprises in tapping into the Mainland domestic market to leverage on the enormous business opportunities presented by this strategy. The Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) will launch a

one-stop “GoGBA” platform in collaboration with the Guangdong Province and related chambers of commerce, and set up a Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Centre in the Greater Bay Area, which will be its first outside Hong Kong, to provide multi-faceted support, including market information on the Greater Bay Area and related government policies, enquiry service and training, as well as business promotion, development and matching services.

5. In addition, HKTDC will help Hong Kong enterprises gain access to the large-scale e-commerce platforms in the Mainland through the provision of training and the operation of the “Online Design Gallery”, with a view to allowing Hong Kong enterprises to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge on digital marketing, whilst promoting the awareness and image of Hong Kong products on these platforms. HKTDC will also use its physical network in the Mainland to provide business support for Hong Kong enterprises in handling operational issues such as import declaration, logistics and settlement of payment.

6. We will also continue to actively participate in the annual China International Import Expo (CIIE) to promote Hong Kong’s quality products and professional services. The third CIIE was held in Shanghai in early November 2020, with about 240 Hong Kong enterprises participating, up by about 20% over the previous year. This reflects the desire of Hong Kong enterprises to develop the Mainland market and network through CIIE.

Enhance the Support for SMEs

7. To support enterprises in conducting “local market” promotion activities through both online and offline exhibitions, as well as to maintain Hong Kong’s leading position in large-scale merchandise exhibitions, the Government proposes to extend the funding scope of the SME Export Marketing Fund (EMF), from specifically aiming at markets outside Hong Kong to also covering large-scale exhibitions held by organisations with good track records targeting at the “local market”, as well as virtual exhibitions organised by HKTDC and reputable exhibition organisers with good track records, for a period of two years. At the same time, the eligibility will no longer be restricted to SMEs only. We plan to seek approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council in early 2021 for implementation of the above-mentioned new support measure.

8. As a matter of fact, to assist enterprises in market exploration, the Government has since January 2020 implemented various enhancement measures to the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales (BUD Fund) and the EMF, including raising the cumulative funding ceiling per enterprise¹; extending the geographical coverage of the BUD Fund to all economies with which Hong Kong has signed Free Trade Agreements (FTAs); and increasing the maximum ratio of initial payment to up to 75% of the approved Government funding, etc. Taking the BUD Fund as an example, from

¹ The cumulative funding ceiling per enterprise for the BUD Fund has doubled from \$2 million to \$4 million; while that for the EMF has doubled from \$400,000 to \$800,000.

the introduction of the enhancement measures in January 2020 to end October 2020, the amount of funding approved under the BUD Fund increased by 24% over the same period in 2019, showing that the measures could effectively support enterprises. As for the EMF, since many local and overseas exhibitions were forced to cancel or postpone due to the pandemic, the number of applications has dropped. In view of this, we have since April 2020 allowed the utilisation of the EMF's funding for participation in virtual exhibitions organised by reputable exhibition organisers with good track records, with a view to helping enterprises explore new avenues for business promotion amidst the pandemic.

9. In order to help address the liquidity problem facing enterprises, especially SMEs with lesser operating experience and hard-hit by the pandemic, the Government introduced the new 90% and Special 100% Guarantee Products under the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme (SFGS) in December 2019 and April 2020 respectively, and substantially increased the total financial commitment from \$100 billion to \$183 billion. In addition, interest subsidy and principal moratorium were provided for guaranteed loans. As the pandemic persists while businesses have yet to recover, we have further enhanced the Special 100% Guarantee Product in September 2020, by increasing the maximum loan amount from the total of employee wages and rents for six months, to that for 12 months, with the ceiling raised from \$4 million to \$5 million, whichever is lower; and increasing the maximum repayment period from three years to five years.

10. From July 2017 to end October 2020, a total of \$67.9 billion of loans have been approved for the 80%, 90% and Special 100% Guarantee Products under the SFGS, benefitting 22 761 enterprises involving 324 191 employees.

11. In addition, the Government has consolidated the services of four existing SME centres since October 2019, including the "Support and Consultation Centre for SMEs" under the Trade and Industry Department, the "SME Centre" under HKTDC, the "SME One" under the Hong Kong Productivity Council, and the "TecONE" under the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, to provide "four-in-one" integrated services so that enterprises can obtain information of all funding schemes at any service points. A one-stop consultation and referral system has also been set up. In view of the epidemic, the four SME centres have re-engineered their mode of service delivery to provide continued support to SMEs through online channels, including providing information on various relief measures under the Anti-epidemic Fund and enhancements to various government funding schemes through webinars, websites and emails to major trade and industrial organisations.

12. To further step up the support to SMEs, a dedicated service team entitled "SME ReachOut" has commenced operation since January 2020 to help SMEs identify suitable funding schemes and provide direct support to SMEs who wish to apply for funding schemes through face-to-face or online meetings, while answering questions relating to applications, with a view to enhancing SMEs' understanding

of the Government's funding schemes and encouraging better utilisation of the support provided by the Government. So far, "SME ReachOut" has organised 14 seminars/webinars, 50 outreach activities (including visits to various chambers, co-working spaces and industrial buildings), and two virtual exhibitions that attract around 55 000 views. The four SME centres and "SME ReachOut" have handled around 90 000 enquiries in total so far.

13. To strengthen support to exporters in view of rising credit risks brought about by the pandemic, the Government has, through the Hong Kong Export Credit Insurance Corporation (ECIC), introduced the "100% Credit Limit Top-Up Scheme" (the Scheme) in June 2020 for a six-month period to enhance the export credit insurance protection for exporters. Under the Scheme, ECIC would automatically double the buyers' credit limits of existing policyholders or uplift the limits to the amount applied for by the policyholders, whichever is smaller, subject to a cap of \$100 million. New credit limit applications would also be topped up in a similar manner. As at mid December 2020, over 7 200 credit limits had been uplifted, giving around \$7,900 million of additional coverage to exporters, covering a cumulative total of \$3,500 million of shipments made since the launch of the Scheme. To continue providing enhanced support to exporters, the Scheme has been extended for six months until 8 June 2021.

Relaunching Economic Opportunities for Hong Kong with Belt and Road Collaboration

14. In face of the global pandemic and the downswing of the international trade and economic situation, we will continue to leverage Hong Kong's advantages under "one country, two systems", proactively consolidate our core competitiveness, and capitalise on Hong Kong's position as the prime platform and a key link for the Belt and Road Initiative (B&RI). Concerted efforts would be taken to seize opportunities arising from different service needs under the "new normalcy" and the "new global landscape", thereby powering the relaunch of Hong Kong's economy.

Anti-epidemic Co-operation and Innovation and Technology Opportunities

15. In response to the growing demand for anti-epidemic, public health and innovation and technology (I&T) products under the "new normalcy", the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) launched the I&T Inventions Experience Sharing and Business Promotion Platform in June 2020. Through government-to-government collaboration and in conjunction with the local I&T sector and the HKTDC, we have shared with overseas governments and stakeholders Hong Kong's research and application of I&T products, relevant experience and related professional services in combating COVID-19 and addressing livelihood needs. In addition to strengthening people-to-people bond and exploring new business

opportunities, the platform also helps promote Hong Kong's edge in I&T.

16. The CEDB jointly organised three webinars with Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia respectively from June to September 2020, at which experiences and insights on the economic, trade and I&T fronts, etc., were shared as well as new opportunities and challenges jointly explored. We will continue to promote such collaboration with overseas governments. Meanwhile, relevant information is disseminated through the HKTDC's global network and dedicated webpage, and a series of overseas business promotion, online sourcing platforms and business matching activities are arranged by the HKTDC to support relevant Hong Kong enterprises and services providers in identifying potential business partners.

Exploring Opportunities in the Overseas Economic and Trade Co-operation Zones

17. In light of the changing dynamics of the international trade landscape, we will continue to support Hong Kong enterprises and professional services in setting up businesses in the Mainland's overseas Economic and Trade Co-operation Zones (ETCZs) so as to capture opportunities under the "new global landscape". Such efforts include supporting the HKTDC's introduction of SME Transformation Sandbox (i.e. "T-box") in April 2020 to share ETCZs-related information with Hong Kong enterprises and provide assistance to interested entities.

18. We have preliminarily identified five ETCZs in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries which Hong Kong enterprises are familiar with, including those in Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia and Indonesia (two ETCZs); and are planning to promote pilot matching of interested Hong Kong enterprises with such ETCZs. We have secured the support of the Ministry of Commerce and on this strength, the Economic and Commercial Offices as well as Economic and Commercial Counsellors of local Chinese Embassies and Consulate Generals will suitably provide assistance to concerned Hong Kong enterprises to connect them with ETCZs. They will also help explore the possibility of further facilitation measures. The Government will organise Hong Kong enterprises to conduct on-site visits at these ETCZs when the epidemic situation subsides.

The 5th Belt and Road Summit

19. The 5th Belt and Road Summit was themed “A Business Vision for Sustainable and Inclusive Future”, was organised on 30 November and 1 December 2020 and has been the first time that the event was held online. Over 6 000 government officials, entrepreneurs and professionals from about 80 countries and regions signed up to participate. Besides discussing international infrastructural co-operation; opportunities arising from the ETCZs; sustainable finance; risk management; and start-up entrepreneurship; a dedicated session was staged to explore how sustainable development, smart solutions and I&T could cope with the epidemic and power the relaunch of the world economy. In addition, some 700 one-on-one

business matching sessions were arranged for over 240 projects at the Summit, facilitating Summit participants to explore collaboration and partnership opportunities under the “new global landscape” and the “new normalcy”.

Strengthening Co-operation on B&R Professional Capacity Building by Leveraging Hong Kong’s Professional Strengths

20. To bring the soft power of our professional services continuously into play in B&R projects, we jointly organised an online high-level roundtable with the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council recently on 8 January 2021. Enterprises of the two places and Hong Kong professional services will be encouraged to leverage the international experience and professional strengths of Hong Kong, and the opportunity will be taken to explore enhancements of modern corporate governance and strengthening R&D application. We also plan to roll out a Mainland Enterprises Partnership Exchange and Interface Programme within 2021. The Programme will facilitate state-owned enterprises and the Mainland’s B&R-related enterprises in forging connections with our major professional services and industry bodies as well as their members. Through exchanges in different forms, the Programme will assist relevant enterprises in project-based or service-oriented sharing and collaboration.

21. With a view to contributing to the continuous development of B&RI, we will work with relevant Mainland authorities on the second

edition of the Policy Exchange and Capacity Building Programme under the theme of green and sustainable development, leveraging Hong Kong's advantages in aligning with international regulations and standards. The Programme can complement the country's goals of pursuing open, green and clean co-operation as well as following high-standard, people-oriented and sustainable B&R development. All these efforts to deepen capacity building exchanges with the Mainland counterparts serve to sustain our contribution to the country's strategic development under the "new global landscape".

Expansion of Network of Free Trade Agreements and Investment Agreements

22. To help Hong Kong enterprises and investors expand their markets and promote the long term economic development of Hong Kong, we have been actively seeking to negotiate and forge FTAs and investment agreements (IAs) with our trading partners, including economies with strong economic and trade connections with Hong Kong as well as markets with development potentials or at strategic locations, so as to further establish Hong Kong's worldwide network of economic and trade connections.

23. The current-term Government signed four FTAs with 13 economies, thereby doubling the number of FTAs signed to eight, involving a total of 20 economies²; and signed four IAs with 13

² Apart from the 13 economies which signed FTAs with the current-term Government, the remaining seven economies are Chile, the Mainland, the European Free Trade Association (viz. Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) and New Zealand.

economies. These agreements are:

- (a) the FTA and IA forged with the ten member states of the ASEAN, which will come into full effect on 12 February 2021³;
- (b) the FTA and IA signed with Australia, which came into effect in January 2020;
- (c) the FTA with Georgia, which came into effect in February 2019;
- (d) the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and Macao SAR Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement, which came into effect in January 2018;
- (e) the IA signed with the United Arab Emirates, which came into effect in March 2020; and
- (f) the IA signed with Mexico in January 2020.

24. We are exploring an FTA with Thailand. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) signed earlier by China and ASEAN, Australia, Japan, Korea and New Zealand is an important milestone for economic integration in the region, clearly and strongly

³ The parts relating to Hong Kong and nine ASEAN member states (namely Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam) have come into effect. The part concerning Cambodia will come into effect on 12 February 2021.

sending out the message in support of a more open, inclusive, and rules-based trade and investment arrangement. As a staunch supporter of free trade, Hong Kong has been actively seeking to join regional economic cooperation and foster closer trade and economic relations in the region. We have, since 2018, expressed to RCEP participating economies our keen interest in joining RCEP. With our high quality FTAs signed with ASEAN, Australia, and New Zealand respectively, as well as the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement implemented with the Mainland, Hong Kong's accession to RCEP will further deepen economic and trade cooperation in the region. We will continue to actively liaise with the relevant economies with a view to being among the first batch of economies to accede to RCEP after its entry into force.

25. Hong Kong has also signed 22 IAs with 31 overseas economies⁴ so far. We have concluded IA negotiations with Bahrain and Myanmar respectively, while the respective negotiations with Russia and Turkey are underway.

Setting up Additional Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices

26. To consolidate and enhance Hong Kong's status and importance among our trading partners, as well as to further explore new business opportunities, we have been actively pursuing the

⁴ Apart from the 13 economies which signed IAs with the current-term of Government, the remaining 18 economies are: Austria, the Belgo-Luxembourg Economic Union, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

expansion of the overseas Economic and Trade Office (ETO) network. The 13th ETO, i.e. the Bangkok ETO in Thailand, commenced operation in February 2019 and is our third ETO in the ASEAN region. We are also making preparations to establish the Dubai ETO⁵ in the United Arab Emirates, which is expected to commence operation in early 2021. The ETO will be the second new ETO to be established by the current-term Government after the Bangkok ETO and will be our first ETO in the Middle East region, expanding our trade and economic network to the area. We will continue exploring the feasibility of setting up new ETOs in other economies with development potentials with a view to strengthening Hong Kong's global trade network.

External Promotion after the Pandemic

27. The social unrest events in Hong Kong in 2019 dealt a heavy blow to our international image. The global pandemic has further adversely affected tourist inclination and confidence of foreign investment coming into Hong Kong. To enhance the international status and image of Hong Kong and rebuild the confidence of overseas communities in Hong Kong, we will, upon further stabilisation of the pandemic, step up our resources and efforts to launch key promotional campaigns in different cities around the world. Through the ETO network and together with various overseas organisations, we will

⁵ The Dubai ETO will be responsible for promoting bilateral trade and economic relations with the member states of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

promote the successful implementation of “One Country, Two Systems” and Hong Kong’s advantages on various fronts, and encourage enterprises to seize the business opportunities provided by the B&RI and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development, using Hong Kong as the launchpad to expand into the Mainland and Asian markets.

Strengthening Investment Promotion

28. In view of the impact of COVID-19 on investment and business activities, Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) has been dynamically adjusting its investment promotion strategies in response to the latest development. It has enhanced aftercare services for existing investors on the one hand, and has leveraged digital platform to reach out to investors on the other.

29. There are 9 025 overseas and Mainland companies in Hong Kong in 2020, up 9.7% over 2017. InvestHK will continue to adopt proactive strategies to attract more overseas and Mainland companies which are well-established or with good development potential to establish or expand their businesses in Hong Kong.

Convention and Exhibition Industry

30. Since last year, the convention and exhibition (C&E) industry has been facing severe challenges amid the epidemic. The Government has been taking various measures to reinvigorate Hong

Kong's status as a premier international C&E hub when the epidemic situation is contained.

31. The Government has established the \$1.02 billion Convention and Exhibition Industry Subsidy Scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund. The subsidy scheme has two parts. One part of it, which was launched on 3 October 2020, subsidises organisers of exhibitions and international conventions held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre and AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) 100% of the venue rental. The other part of the subsidy scheme subsidises exhibitors of exhibitions and participants of major conferences organised by the HKTDC 50% of the participation fee, and this part was launched on 30 November 2020. We have announced earlier that the entire subsidy scheme would be extended to 31 December 2021 in order to encourage more C&E activities to be held in Hong Kong.

32. The Government has also set aside \$40 million under the Anti-epidemic Fund to establish the Printing and Publishing Sector Subsidy Scheme to subsidise all the participation fees of exhibitors in the next Hong Kong Book Fair, capped at \$100,000 per local exhibitor and \$10,000 per non-local exhibitor. HKTDC announced earlier that after discussion with the representatives of the Hong Kong Book Fair's supporting organisations, the Hong Kong Book Fair would be postponed to July 2021 in view of pandemic development. The relevant subsidy will remain applicable for the purpose.

33. Amid the uncertainties on physical exhibitions brought by the epidemic, HKTDC is actively developing its digital platform to connect buyers and suppliers worldwide and help Hong Kong enterprises explore business opportunities and develop overseas markets. Indeed, HKTDC organised several virtual exhibitions in the past few months, and introduced many promotion plans comprising exhibitions and online publicity for SMEs to utilise HKTDC's platform to strengthen promotional effect.

34. While the epidemic brings challenges to the C&E industry, we consider the impacts are of short-term nature and the industry's demand for physical exhibitions remains strong. Therefore, to consolidate and strengthen our status as a premier international C&E and sourcing centre, the Government will continue to take forward two plans to expand major C&E facilities, i.e. the redevelopment of the three government towers in Wan Chai North and the Kong Wan Fire Station (the former will be gradually relocated to a number of new government buildings in various districts, while the latter will be relocated to the Fenwick Pier Fleet Arcade site) into C&E facilities, hotel and Grade A office, as well as the construction of phase two of AWE on the airport island. These two projects together will increase C&E space by more than 40% (66 700 sq. m). As for the proposal to develop a new convention centre on the site above the Exhibition Station of the Shatin to Central Link, in view of the technical difficulties involved, the uncertainties concerning the construction period and concerns about cost-effectiveness, we have decided to use the site for other purposes.

Supporting the Professional Services Sector

35. In addition, to further encourage the Hong Kong professional services sectors to step up promotion of Hong Kong's competitive edges and professional services to the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area and overseas markets after the pandemic has stabilised, \$50 million will be set aside under the Professional Services Advancement Support Scheme (PASS) to subsidise major professional bodies' participation in relevant exchanges, promotion and professional standard enhancement activities organised by the Government, HKTDC and ETOs. Since its launch in 2016, the PASS has supported various professional services sectors in organising 61 exchanges, promotion and professional standard enhancement projects, with a total funding of \$45 million.

Taking forward the Trade Single Window Project and Enhancing Cargo Clearance Efficiency

36. On the other hand, we have been pressing ahead with the development of the Trade Single Window (TSW) to provide a one-stop electronic platform for the lodging of various types of import and export trade documents with the Government for trade declaration and customs clearance purposes. The TSW is being rolled out in three phases. Phase 1 was launched since December 2018 and has now been fully completed in providing e-services for 14 types of trade documents. The trade's feedback has been positive. Furthermore, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council has approved in July

2020 the funding for implementing Phase 2, which will further extend the TSW to cover another 28 types of trade documents from 2023 onwards by batches. Trade documents covered by these two phases are mainly for the import and export of specific controlled products. We will closely engage the trade to ensure that the system will be user-friendly and meet users' needs, and that the preparation work can fully take into account the views of the trade.

37. The Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) will also continue to take forward various cargo customs facilitation measures, including the Single E-Lock Scheme (SELS) and the Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) Programme. There are now 63 clearance points in the Guangdong Province under the SELS⁶, including 50 which cover all nine Mainland municipalities in the Greater Bay Area. In respect of the AEO Programme, Hong Kong has concluded Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) with 11 economies. Our accredited traders may enjoy customs facilitation (such as reduced or prioritised customs clearance) in Hong Kong as well as economies with MRAs signed with Hong Kong. C&ED will continue to extend Hong Kong's MRA network and encourage the trade to make good use of the schemes to seize business opportunities and open new markets.

⁶ By means of electronic lock and Global Positioning System equipment, SELS reduces repeated inspection by the customs authorities of Guangdong and Hong Kong on the same shipment of inter-modal cargoes between the two places, thereby expediting cross-boundary cargo flow and enhancing cargo clearance efficiency.

Enhancing the Intellectual Property (IP) Regime

38. Moreover, we will continue to enhance our IP regime to meet Hong Kong's socio-economic needs.

(a) Implementing the “original grant patent” (OGP) system

We have launched the OGP system and refined the short-term patent system (collectively referred to as the “new patent system”) in Hong Kong in December 2019. The OGP system creates a direct route for patent applicants to file a standard patent application for his invention directly in Hong Kong, thereby dispensing the need to file a corresponding application in one of the designated patent offices outside Hong Kong beforehand. The implementation of the new patent system will facilitate the long-term development of Hong Kong as an innovation and IP trading hub

(b) Implementing the international registration system under the “Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks” (Madrid Protocol)

The Trade Marks (Amendment) Ordinance 2020 (the Amendment Ordinance) was passed by the Legislative Council in June 2020. It provides a legal basis for application of the Madrid Protocol in Hong Kong, and also confers powers on the C&ED to enforce the criminal

provisions under the Trade Marks Ordinance. Subject to the progress of other preparatory work (such as preparing the related subsidiary legislation and setting up the required information technology system), the Madrid Protocol can be applied to Hong Kong in 2022-23 the earliest.

(c) Amending the Copyright Ordinance to enhance the copyright exceptions for persons with print disabilities

The Copyright (Amendment) Ordinance 2020, which came into effect in June 2020, enhances the statutory copyright exceptions for persons with a print disability to meet the standards under the “Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled”.

We will continue to implement various measures to strengthen Hong Kong’s position as an IP trading hub in the Asia-Pacific region. Such measures include holding the Business of IP Asia Forum and providing free consultation service and capacity building for SMEs.

Review of Retail Manpower Development Measures

39. On the other hand, three retail manpower development measures⁷ were launched in 2014-15. As the Government and related

⁷ Three retail manpower development measures to support the industry include: (i) “Earn & Learn Pilot Scheme for Retail Industry” (Pilot Scheme); (ii) “Retail Technology Adoption Assistance Scheme for Manpower Demand Management” (ReTAAS); and (iii) relevant promotion activities.

organisations have put in place other similar funding schemes and courses in the past few years to support the industry⁸ and the number of enterprises or individuals joining these measures have dropped significantly⁹, we will stop accepting new applications for the relevant measures from 2021 onwards, but applications submitted and projects approved before the deadline and individuals already enrolled under the measures will not be affected.

40. The Policy Address sets out in detail many other proposals on promoting economic development and developing tourism. CEDB will also brief other Panels of Legislative Council (including the Economic Development Panel and the Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel) on proposals of relevance to them. We will not repeat such proposals here.

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⁸ The Vocational Training Council currently offers two full-time Government subsidised retail courses (i.e. Higher Diploma in Retail Innovation and Management and Diploma of Foundation Studies - Retail). These courses are similar in nature to the Pilot Scheme. About 120 students were enrolled in these subsidised courses in the 2020/21 academic year. In 2016, the Innovation and Technology Commission launched the Technology Voucher Programme (TVP), which is similar in nature to ReTAAS as both schemes support local enterprises to adopt information technology services and solutions. As the funding terms are more attractive, TVP is more popular with the trade. As of end October 2020, TVP received 1 969 applications from the wholesale and retail industry, of which 793 were approved with a total funding of about \$121.6 million.

⁹ Four students were enrolled under the Pilot Scheme in the 2020/21 academic year. On average, about four eligible applications were received per month under ReTAAS in 2019-20.