

CE welcomes promulgation of Qianhai Plan and Hengqin Plan

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, welcomed the Central Government's promulgation of the Plan for Comprehensive Deepening Reform and Opening Up of the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone (Qianhai Plan) today (September 6) and the Plan for the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin (Hengqin Plan) yesterday. She expressed the hope that, with policy support from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, various sectors of the community will seize the opportunities brought about by the Qianhai Plan and the Hengqin Plan and join hands in taking forward the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

"Since its development a decade ago, Qianhai, positioned as the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone following President Xi Jinping's steer on 'relying on Hong Kong, serving the Mainland and opening up to the world', has attracted many Hong Kong enterprises. Currently, about 11 500 Hong Kong-invested enterprises have registered in Qianhai, most of which are in modern service industries including financial services, modern logistics, information services, technological services and professional services. Hong Kong enterprises also formed the Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce, Qianhai, Shenzhen in 2015. In addition, Qianhai attaches importance to supporting young people of the two places to develop their careers and start new businesses, including by attracting young Hong Kong entrepreneurs to settle in the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Youth Innovation and Entrepreneur Hub (E Hub). The E Hub has provided incubation support to quite a number of successful start-ups and is well received by Hong Kong youths. It is one of the highlights that showcases Hong Kong-Shenzhen co-operation," Mrs Lam said.

"More than 40 years of Hong Kong-Shenzhen co-operation under the national policy of reform and opening up has created a unique tale of the two cities, which fully demonstrates our complementary and win-win relationship that leverages Hong Kong's advantages in serving the country's needs. The promulgation of the Qianhai Plan will foster Hong Kong-Shenzhen co-operation at a higher level under which the two cities can serve as 'dual engines' to drive development in the Greater Bay Area.

"The Qianhai Plan has once again demonstrated the country's key strategic planning, under which the development of the Greater Bay Area would enrich the implementation of 'One Country, Two Systems', deepen reform and expand the scope of opening up, and enhance the level of co-operation amongst Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. Utilising modern service industries as an entry point, we will further promote Guangdong-Hong Kong co-operation as well as Hong Kong-Shenzhen co-operation, with a view to enhancing Hong Kong's integration into the overall national development. Hong Kong has the institutional strength of 'One Country, Two Systems' and offers a first-class

business environment that is highly market-oriented and internationalised and underpinned by the rule of law. Hong Kong also serves as international financial, maritime and trade centres as well as an international aviation hub. Not only does the Qianhai Plan give full play to Hong Kong's long-held advantages in high-end professional services, and elevate the function of the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone, but it also promotes the long-term development for Hong Kong professional services."

As clearly stated in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Qianhai is one of the major co-operation platforms in the Greater Bay Area. According to the Qianhai Plan, the area of the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone will be increased significantly from 14.92 square kilometres to 120.56 sq km. It also stresses the promotion of high-level opening up in Qianhai, the fostering of innovative development of modern service industries, and the acceleration of the building of a system of modern services that is compatible with Hong Kong and international standards. Hong Kong will capitalise on its own advantages to assist in promoting full liberalisation of trade in services in Qianhai, greater mutual access of the financial markets and a higher level of opening up in legal matters, thereby expanding the room for development for professionals in different sectors and enterprises in Hong Kong.

"In fact, with the support of the Central Government, the Governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen have done a lot of work for Hong Kong professional sectors to tap into the Qianhai market. For legal services, the amended and approved Regulations of the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone allows wholly owned Hong Kong enterprises registered in Qianhai to adopt laws of Hong Kong as the applicable law in their civil and commercial contracts where there are no 'foreign-related elements'. With the introduction of the Greater Bay Area Legal Professional Examination, Hong Kong solicitors and barristers who have accumulated five years or more of practice experience will be allowed to provide legal services regarding specified civil and commercial affairs, including litigation and non-litigation matters, to which the Mainland laws are applicable in the nine Mainland municipalities in the Greater Bay Area, including Shenzhen, upon passing the examination and obtaining a lawyer's practice certificate (Greater Bay Area). For architectural and related engineering professional services, consultants and contractors on the approved lists administered by the HKSAR Government, as well as professionals registered with relevant registration boards in Hong Kong, are able to directly provide services in Qianhai by obtaining equivalent qualifications on the Mainland through a registration system. The measure covers five professional sectors, namely architecture, engineering, surveying, planning and landscape architecture. So far, about 30 relevant enterprises and over 170 professionals have successfully completed registration. In order to expedite high-level co-operation and identify more concrete measures for implementation in Qianhai, the Governments of Hong Kong and Shenzhen have agreed to set up a high-level working group. The Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs is the convenor on the Hong Kong side."

Moreover, the HKSAR Government will discuss with relevant central ministries to achieve further liberalisation of trade in services as set out in the Qianhai Plan through the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), so as to enable the professional sectors in Hong Kong to make early planning and relevant arrangements. The HKSAR Government is prepared to join hands with relevant sectors to offer views and co-ordinate efforts to complement the expansion of the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone in areas of financial services, innovation and technology, legal services and business environment.

"The Hengqin Plan will create favourable conditions for the diversified development of Macao and provide many facilitating measures for the development of its industries. I am sure Hong Kong's business and professional sectors will also feel excited about this development. Since the commissioning of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, Hong Kong, Macao and Zhuhai have become much closer to each other, giving rise to favourable conditions for Hong Kong's participation in the development of Hengqin. Indeed, with the support of the Central Government and the Guangdong Provincial Government, the Airport Authority Hong Kong is pursuing closer co-operation between the airports of Hong Kong and Zhuhai to enhance their air cargo and logistics capabilities, which will also contribute to the development of industries in Hengqin," Mrs Lam said.

The HKSAR Government will explore how Hong Kong can provide support for and contribute to the implementation of the Hengqin Plan through the existing co-operation mechanism with the Macao Special Administrative Region Government.