

# LCQ13: Trading of animal fur products

Following is a question by the Hon Claudia Mo and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

At present, Hong Kong is the world's third largest fur clothing exporter, and one of the world's major sources of fur garments and accessories. Some animal welfare concern groups are concerned that Hong Kong's fur industry is contributing to the inhumane killing of some one billion rabbits and 50 million other animals in fur farms and in the wild each year for the worldwide fur trade. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the Mainland is Hong Kong's largest export market of furskins (of which a large proportion are re-exports from overseas countries for fur clothing production on the Mainland) and some concern groups are worried about Mainland's ineffective regulation of her fur industry, whether the Government will consider discussing with the Mainland authorities the removal of leather and furskin articles from the list of tariff-free types of products under phase three of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement, as Hong Kong's first step towards a ban on fur trade; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it is learnt that there is currently little or no regulation of fur trade on the Mainland, which is the world's largest fur importer, whether the Government will consider banning fur trade with the Mainland until her fur trade regulations have been tightened to a level on a par with those of the European Union; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as there is now an international trend of tightened regulation of or imposition of a ban on fur trade and fur farming (e.g. San Francisco has banned fur trade and Japan has phased out fur farming), and many international fashion brands have implemented fur-free policies for fashion design, whether the Government will consider introducing a ban on the import, export and re-export of fur products; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply

President,

Hong Kong is a free port. We pursue a free trade policy and do not maintain barriers on trade. No tariff is charged on import or export of goods. Nonetheless, certain goods are subject to import/export control in Hong Kong under certain specified circumstances, for example, to fulfill obligations undertaken by Hong Kong to trading partners or international conventions, or out of public health, safety or internal security

considerations, etc. Examples of goods that are subject to import/export control are live food poultry, game and prohibited meat, endangered animals and plants species, Chinese herbal medicines and proprietary Chinese medicines, plants, plant pests and soil, as well as controlled chemicals, etc. Also, the United Nations from time to time passes resolutions to impose sanctions on certain countries, and Hong Kong will impose restrictions on concerned trade and other activities according to the sanctions.

In consultation with the Food and Health Bureau (FHB), the Environment Bureau (ENB) and the Trade and Industry Department, our reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

According to ENB, to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was signed by governments of a number of countries in 1973 to regulate the import and export of endangered animals and plants through a licensing system, so as to protect wild animals and plants from being affected by international trade, and to ensure their sustainable use. At present, there are 183 Parties to the Convention, and Hong Kong has implemented the requirements of CITES since 1976. CITES requires that the import, introduction from the sea, export or re-export of the species listed in its three Appendices be subject to licensing control. In accordance with the criteria and requirements of CITES, Hong Kong enacted the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) (the Ordinance) to regulate the import, export and possession of endangered species. For animal species listed under CITES, their international trade including skin and fur trade is regulated under the Ordinance. The import, export, re-export and possession of the concerned endangered species, including their skin and fur, are regulated under a licensing system and the specimens must be inspected by an authorised officer at the time of entering or leaving Hong Kong.

According to FHB's understanding, there is no animal fur farming in Hong Kong and there is also no internationally harmonised control on the import and export of fur products of non-endangered animals. Currently, the Government has no plan to ban the import and export of the trading of animal fur products by legislative means. Nevertheless, FHB will closely monitor the international trend and the related developments.

As regards the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), it is a free trade agreement consistent with the provisions of the World Trade Organization. In 2018, exports of furskin products of Hong Kong origin under zero tariff preference of CEPA to the Mainland accounted for only less than 0.01 per cent of the total exports of those products from Hong Kong to the Mainland.