

INTERNATIONAL REGULATORS FORUM
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**Opening Panel: Infrastructure and the regulator's role
in ensuring access to technology and information**

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Christianne, Fellow Panelists, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to speak in this panel today. First of all, I hope you all are well. During the days in the epidemic, telecommunications has become more important and indispensable than ever to our daily life and the continued functioning of the society. I therefore find it a right time for me to share with you how the Communications Authority in Hong Kong is facilitating the development of telecommunications infrastructure as well as encouraging access to technology and information.

Facilitating infrastructure development

Release of spectrum and installation of radio base stations

2. Facilitating the development of infrastructure for 5G is our main focus over the past year. To this end, we made available a total of 4,500 MHz of 5G spectrum for release last year. It includes administrative assignments of millimetre-wave spectrum in the 26 and 28 GHz bands as well as the auctioning of spectrum in the 3.3, 3.5 and 4.9 GHz bands. The amount and mix of the 5G spectrum forms a solid base for the industry to develop high-speed and high-capacity 5G services.

3. To facilitate the roll out of 5G networks by mobile network operators, we launched a pilot scheme in March last year to make available more than one thousand government premises for installation of radio base stations at a nominal annual rent. In parallel, we have also been working with

relevant parties to open up street furniture including smart lamp poles, public payphone kiosks and sheltered bus stops for enhancing 5G service coverage at street level.

4. Thanks to the effort of mobile network operators, 5G services were commercially launched in Hong Kong on first of April this year. Competitive 5G service plans are being offered at a monthly charge down to 25 US dollars for 30 GigaBytes. The outdoor coverage of 5G services is currently in the range of 70% to 90% of the population. Mobile network operators are working towards full outdoor coverage in a year or so. Anticipating the growing demand for 5G services, we are conducting a series of public consultations for releasing another batch of 5G spectrum in the 600 MHz, 700 MHz and 4.9 GHz bands so that the relevant spectrum will be assigned by way of auction before the end of next year.

Subsidy scheme for extension of fibre backbone networks to remote areas

5. A ubiquitous 5G infrastructure cannot be built without an extensive optical fibre backbone network. While there are multiple fibre networks in the urban areas providing fibre-to-the-building or fibre-to-the-home connectivity to some 80% of households in Hong Kong, we still have more than two hundred villages, which are scattered in remote areas or on outlying islands, do not have any fibre connection yet. In order to encourage fixed network operators to further extend their fibre networks to these areas, we implemented a subsidy scheme worth about 100 million US dollars. The relevant construction works already started earlier this year. When the extended fibre networks progressively reach these areas starting from next year, they will support not only high-speed household broadband connections but wireless telecommunications services, such as 5G and public Wi-Fi, there.

Access to technology and information

Publicity campaign for 5G

6. An advanced telecommunications infrastructure is just a means to an end. The success hinges on massive adoption by the general public. To

promote public awareness about 5G and its infinite possibilities, we have set up a thematic 5G website for public consumption and produced short video promoting use of 5G services for broadcasting via TV and radio programme channels.

Support scheme for encouraging early deployment of 5G

7. Besides the general public, for enterprise users which were hit hard by COVID-19, we see the development of a 5G ecosystem not only vital to technology advancement but can also sustain business in the current difficult situations.

8. To provide a stimulus on the demand side, we launched a support scheme under the anti-epidemic fund in May this year to encourage various business sectors for early deployment of 5G technology so as to improve their operational efficiency and foster innovation. The scheme would subsidise half of the cost of the 5G projects subject to a cap. The scheme was welcomed by small and medium enterprises and we have approved applications from a variety of sectors, including construction, building facilities management, transport, medical and healthcare, environmental protection, education, e-sports, and entertainment, etc.

9. We hope the completion of those subsidised projects would bring more novel applications and stimulate the emergence of more 5G use cases benefitting the community at large.

Emergency alert system

10. The currently prolonged epidemic also underscores the importance of giving timely alerts to the general public. As one of the counter-epidemic measures, we have engaged mobile network operators earlier this year to establish and operate an emergency alert system based on the cell broadcast technology so that the government can disseminate important and time-critical messages to mobile phone users relating to public health and safety. The system is expected to be brought into service shortly.

Concluding remarks

11. In summary, rapid development of telecommunications brings us new opportunities and challenges. As a regulator in the communications sector, we will continue to facilitate the industry in offering advanced telecommunications services to enterprises for enhanced business efficiency and the general public for better quality of life.

12. That's all I would like to share with you on the topic. I stop here and would be happy to exchange views with you in the live Q&A session. Thank you!

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