

Television Broadcasts Limited’s Response to CITB’s the Public Consultation on Digital 21 Strategy

Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) welcomes the public consultation of the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau (CITB) in formulating strategies to harness the benefits of information technology for business and the community. Our comments on specific issues are as follows:

1. Infrastructure and Business Environment

1.1 The Broadcasting Industry

We welcome a comprehensive review of the broadcasting regulatory regime towards deregulation and convergence and we believe that industry input is most important in this endeavour. We would like to work together with the Administration on the review in preparation for the proposed consultation which should include relevant legislation, regulations, codes of practice and administrative directives issued by the Broadcasting Authority and Telecommunications Authority.

1.2 Digital Broadcasting

We would comment on the 2nd Consultation on Digital Terrestrial (DTT) Broadcasting (issued 5 December) in detail after studying the Consultation Paper. However, the direction for development suggested seemed to be contradicting what the Government had proposed in the Digital 21 Strategy. While the Government recognised the opportunities afforded by the Mainland market, the inter-dependence of Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta and the necessity for economic integration, in the 2nd DTT Consultation Paper, the Government seemed to encourage the DTT Broadcasting Industry to move away from the Mainland Market – as in the 5 December 2003 Press Release “ATV and TVB may wait for the Mainland standard while new comers may adopt the DVB-T standard and roll out new service as soon as practicable.”

We would like to reiterate that for the benefits of Hong Kong and healthy growth of the Broadcasting Industry, it is of crucial importance that China's DTT system should be considered before coming to any conclusion as to which system Hong Kong should adopt.

2. Institutional Review

2.1 Comprehensive Review of Regulatory Structure and Regime

We support the Government's principle in conducting an Institutional Review and studying whether the regulatory structure and regime on Broadcasting and Telecommunications could meet the demands in the era of deregulation and convergence. However, such institutional review should also cover regulatory structures and regimes governing other media/platforms such as internet which are users/potential users of information technology if the community were to maximise the potentials offered by digital technology.

We hope that the Government could have open dialogue with the industries concerned at different stages in drafting the consultation papers so that the Government could be well-informed of industry needs, operation and market conditions for more fruitful consultations. Only such consultations would benefit industries, the economy and the Hong Kong community as a whole. TVB would be happy to meet with officials and legislators concerned in discussions prior to the drafting of consultation papers concerning the industries and media environment.

2.2 Information Infrastructure Advisory Committee (IIAC)

A review of the role and representation of the IIAC is long overdue. For the growth and development of a healthy multi-media market and to fully capitalise on what information technology could offer, representatives of the Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Industry should be included in the IIAC, especially with the Government's preparation to steer the introduction of Digital Terrestrial TV (DTT) in Hong Kong.

3. A Vibrant IT Industry

3.1 Mainland/Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) and Economic Integration with the Pearl River Delta (PRD)

We would like to remind the Government that the Broadcasting Industry is an IT Industry as well; therefore, Government's leadership in harnessing the benefit of CEPA and economic integration with PRD should also have the needs of the Broadcasting Industry in mind. The Broadcasting Industry is also a creative industry and entertainment industry same as the Film Industry. We look forward to Government's leadership in assisting the lifting of import and production restrictions in and for the Mainland market.

We wish to reiterate that TVB would be happy to meet with the Administration for discussions prior to the drafting of forthcoming consultation papers and others concerning the media industries and operating environment.

Television Broadcasts Limited
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