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26 November 2012

(By fax 2840 0716)

Public Accounts Committee
 Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China
 Legislative Council Complex,
 1 Legislative Council Road, Central
 Hong Kong
 (Attn: Ms. Mary SO)

Dear Ms SO

Public Accounts Committee
 Consideration of Chapter 1 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 59
 Monitoring and reporting of air quality

I refer to your letter dated 21 November 2012, seeking for information on ambient concentration levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and respirable suspended particulates (PM₁₀) in neighbouring cities/countries such as Shanghai and Singapore in 2011. Please find a table below showing the data of Shanghai and Singapore on top of the 3 cities mentioned in Chapter 1 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 59.

Ambient annual concentration of PM₁₀ and NO₂ (ug/m³) in 2011

	Hong Kong	Shanghai	Singapore	New York	Sydney	London
PM ₁₀	48	80	27	19	15	24
NO ₂	53	51	25	39	14	36

Please note that some cities such as New York and London only report the pollutant concentration levels for individual air quality monitoring stations but not the whole city. We understand that the Audit Commission derived the annual pollutant concentrations of these cities by taking the average of the concentration data from all of their stations.

We would like to draw Members' attention to the limitations of making direct comparison of the monitoring data of different cities because different measurement methodologies could be used by different cities. In this regard, the WHO has advised that there are limitations in comparing air quality data across different places as there could be variations in the positioning of monitoring stations and measurement methodology for different places. To illustrate the limitations, NO₂ was measured only at two ambient air quality stations in New York City while the pollutant is monitored at all the 11 ambient and three roadside stations in Hong Kong. In addition, no station in Manhattan of New York has measured NO₂ since the closure of the only station that measured the pollutant in 2008. Before closure, the station registered NO₂ level at 64 ug/m³ in 2007, which was similar to that measured in the urban areas in Hong Kong. In contrast, all our air quality monitoring stations measured NO₂ and quite a number of them are sited in urban areas with heavy traffic.

Yours Sincerely



(Dave HO)

Principal Environmental Protection Officer
for Director of Environmental Protection

c.c. Public Accounts Committee (fax no. 2840 0716)

Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (fax no. 2147 5239)

Director of Audit (fax no 2583 9063)