

**For discussion on
2 April 2024**

Legislative Council Panel on Security

**Co-operation in emergency management
within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area**

Purpose

This paper seeks to inform Members of the latest work progress on the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Emergency Management Co-operation and Greater Bay Area Emergency Response Operation Co-operation Framework Agreement (“Framework Agreement”) and the Greater Bay Area Emergency Response Operational Plan (“Operational Plan”).

Background

2. Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao signed the Guangdong-Hong Kong Emergency Management Co-operation Agreement¹ (“Guangdong-Hong Kong Agreement”) and the Guangdong-Macao Emergency Management Co-operation Agreement² (“Guangdong-Macao Agreement”) respectively back in 2008. Over the past ten years or so, both agreements have played a crucial role in emergency management in the three places and made achievements in various areas of emergency management.

3. The Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area³ promulgated in February 2019 clearly stipulates that the Greater Bay Area (“GBA”) needs to deepen co-operation in social governance, improve the mechanism for contingency management, and set up a GBA

¹ Guangdong and Hong Kong signed the Guangdong-Hong Kong Emergency Management Co-operation Agreement after the Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation Joint Conference on 05.08.2008.

² Guangdong and Macao signed the Guangdong-Macao Emergency Management Co-operation Agreement in the Guangdong-Macao Co-operation Joint Conference on 04.12.2008.

³ The Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area; Chapter Eight: Developing a Quality Living Circle for Living, Working and Travelling; Section 6: Fostering Co-operation in Social Security and Social Governance.

co-ordination platform for contingency response. In addition, the Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China⁴ has also put forward requirements for emergency management work, such as establishing an overall safety and emergency response framework, enhancing capacity for disaster prevention, mitigation, and relief and for responding to and providing support during major public emergencies, as well as strengthening regional emergency response capacity.

4. Therefore, it is mentioned in the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address that Hong Kong together with other GBA cities will formulate, negotiate and implement a new Operational Plan, establishing a systematic emergency-response mechanism that is mutually complementary and in the spirit of joint prevention and collaboration. Our work in this respect has received support from relevant central ministries and leaders of emergency response units in Guangdong and Macao.

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Emergency Management Co-operation and Greater Bay Area Emergency Response Operation Co-operation Framework Agreement

The co-operation objectives of the Framework Agreement

5. Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao agreed to formulate the Framework Agreement under the principle of thoroughly implementing “One Country, Two Systems” and the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, with a view to establishing a government-led co-operation mechanism for emergency response, with professional emergency rescue forces as the mainstay and actions as the core.

6. The Framework Agreement will retain the past co-operation outcomes achieved by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao under the Guangdong-Hong Kong Agreement and Guangdong-Macao Agreement. Under the new agreement, the parties will setup a co-ordination mechanism and relevant thematic working groups to initiate different collaborations building on the foundations established in the past while being forward-looking, conduct in-depth discussions and implement the relevant work.

⁴ The requirements on “enhancing public safety governance” as stipulated in the Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China delivered by the President on 16 October 2022.

Key areas of co-operation under the Framework Agreement

7. With the solid foundation laid by the Guangdong-Hong Kong Agreement and Guangdong-Macao Agreement, Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will continue to deepen co-operation and exchange in areas such as emergency information sharing, emergency response technology development and emergency personnel training.

8. On emergency information sharing, the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will promote the establishment and enhancement of mechanisms for regular information communication, in order to timely notify and exchange emergency information on contingencies affecting the three places. In addition, the three governments will promote the establishment of a round-the-clock emergency alert notification mechanism, so as to notify other parties in a timely manner of any impending or existing contingencies that may cause serious harm to them.

9. On the development of emergency response technology, the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will promote technological innovation in the emergency response system, with a view to enhancing the capabilities of the technologies and equipment for monitoring, early warning and prevention, and contingency management.

10. On the training and exchange of emergency personnel, the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will continue to strengthen their co-operation in fostering emergency management personnel development. Through professional and technical exchange, field trips, and organising training courses, etc., the three places will intensify the exchange and training of their emergency personnel in order to enhance their contingency handling capability.

11. Furthermore, Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will collaboratively formulate a brand new Operational Plan under the Framework Agreement, specifically tailored for cities in the GBA, taking into account the geographical proximity of the cities.

Greater Bay Area Emergency Response Operational Plan

The co-operation objectives of the Operational Plan

12. The governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao each have rich experience and expertise in responding to disasters and contingencies. They also have in place professional emergency rescue personnel and equipment capable of handling different contingencies. The Operational Plan will be formulated to strengthen the emergency response capabilities of the three places to cope with accidents, disasters, natural disasters and other contingencies affecting the GBA, to promote overall improvement in emergency management in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, and to achieve effective utilisation and rational sharing of emergency response resources. In summary, the targeted co-operation outcomes of the Operational Plan can be consolidated into a mechanism for technical and knowledge exchange, a mechanism for resource sharing, and a mechanism for emergency mobilisation and co-ordination.

(a) Technical and knowledge exchange mechanism

13. Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao possess valuable experience and technical strengths in respect of emergency response. In the future, the three places will further strengthen mutual learning, sharing and co-operation. This includes regularly arranging training courses focusing on emergency response techniques, learning from each other's contingency planning, and enhancing exchange of emergency response technologies and knowledge. Specific measures include establishing effective communication platforms and information sharing mechanisms.

14. Taking the professional development of firefighting and rescue in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao as an example, the Hong Kong Fire Services Department ("HKFSD") has all along maintained close co-operation with its counterparts in the GBA. It set up the Greater Bay Area Fire and Rescue Knowledge Management Platform in July last year to share operational experience, firefighting and rescue strategies, and the latest information on firefighting and ambulance training courses, with a view to promoting inter-connectivity in the GBA. Apart from making use of the online platform to share information on emergency response know-how and valuable experience, the HKFSD has also organised technical exchange sessions on a regular basis and invited fire services counterparts in the GBA to participate in these sessions,

in order to deepen exchange and co-operation, and enhance the professional standards together.

(b) Resource sharing mechanism

15. The governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will work out a list of emergency supplies and equipment, emergency personnel and experts that can be shared across the entire GBA. In the event of an emergency, based on the needs of the place of occurrence and the resource sharing mechanism, other parties may provide corresponding support in terms of emergency supplies and equipment, emergency personnel and expert deployment, etc.

16. Benefiting from the resource sharing mechanism, the HKSAR Government can, in accordance with the Operational Plan, seek support from neighbouring cities in the GBA for situations where there may be constraints in resources for emergency response or where major contingencies cannot be effectively handled. The Guangdong Province has strong emergency response capability, especially in terms of heavy-duty equipment. Sharing of emergency resources within the GBA can further strengthen Hong Kong's overall emergency response capabilities. On the other hand, the HKSAR Government will also provide emergency response resources to other cities in the GBA under the resource sharing mechanism, achieving mutual benefits and complementing each other's strengths.

17. The HKSAR Government has prepared a list of shareable resources covering rescue equipment, vehicles, vessels, and fire and ambulance personnel. The fire and rescue services units of Guangdong and Macao have taken note of the list provided by the HKSAR Government and are currently conducting research on the resources they can offer for sharing.

(c) Emergency mobilisation and co-ordination mechanism

18. To effectively implement the Operational Plan, the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will, based on the principle of territoriality, establish a joint emergency command mechanism to be led by the place of occurrence to co-ordinate responses to major disasters and incidents affecting the safety of the GBA. In case of insufficient resources for emergency response, or difficulties in handling a major contingency effectively, the requesting party may seek support at the government level, and the assisting party will respond

and co-ordinate responses at the government level, providing the necessary support in terms of resource deployment and other areas.

19. The efficiency of cross-boundary emergency response hinges on the smooth flow of personnel, equipment and supplies at the boundary control points during emergency response. The HKSAR Government has sought advice and assistance from the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China and the National Immigration Administration of the People's Republic of China on the establishment of a cross-boundary "green" channel for emergency personnel, equipment and supplies, and has received recognition and support. In addition, the three governments will formulate plans and principles to facilitate the smooth flow of personnel, equipment and supplies during emergency response under the existing laws of the three places, in order to practically enhance the effectiveness of cross-boundary rescue.

20. In addition to the above, the Operational Plan will contain contingency plans targeting different contingencies, such as earthquake disasters, etc. The plans will specify the emergency response and rescue procedures, division of responsibilities, and the actual operation of the joint emergency command mechanism, with a view to reducing the response time and enhancing the efficiency of rescue efforts.

21. To realise the core values of the emergency mobilisation and co-ordination mechanism, the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao plan to organise a cross-boundary joint exercise in the first half of this year in a GBA city targeting the contingency management of earthquake disasters, and hope that the cross-boundary joint exercise will help to fine-tune the cross-boundary "green" channel policy and the implementation details of the joint emergency command mechanism.

Work progress on taking forward the Framework Agreement

22. Led by the Security Bureau, the HKSAR Government held the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Emergency Response Joint Meeting cum Exchange and Visit Programme in Hong Kong in September last year. We have invited the Department of Emergency Management of Guangdong Province, the Secretariat for Security of the Macao SAR Government, and the Guangdong Fire and Rescue Brigade, as well as the

representatives of the emergency response units of nine Mainland cities in the GBA and the Macao SAR Government, to participate in the Joint Conference to review the emergency response co-operation achievements of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, and to take forward the formulation of the Framework Agreement. Representatives of the three governments are expected to sign the Framework Agreement in Hong Kong within 2024. The HKSAR Government is also taking the lead in compiling the Operational Plan, the specific content and implementation details of which will be finalised upon discussion with the governments of Guangdong and Macao. Meanwhile, the three places will consolidate the experience gained from the joint exercise to further optimise the relevant operational procedures, in order to enhance the efficiency of cross-boundary rescue efforts.

Views Sought

23. Members are invited to take note of the content of this document and comment on the work to take forward the implementation of emergency management co-operation among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. We firmly believe that through the Framework Agreement, personnel from the three places can complement each other's strengths and jointly seize new opportunities for co-operation in emergency management. By deepening the co-operation in social governance and injecting new vitality into the development of emergency management and rescue work in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, the three places will work together to develop the GBA into a quality living circle ideal for living, working and travelling.

Security Bureau
March 2024