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# ABOUT THE HKMA

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority is Hong Kong's central banking institution. The HKMA has four main functions: maintaining the stability of the Hong Kong dollar; promoting the safety of Hong Kong's banking system; managing Hong Kong's official reserves; and maintaining and developing Hong Kong's financial infrastructure.

## THE HKMA'S LEGAL MANDATE

The HKMA was established on 1 April 1993 by merging the Office of the Exchange Fund with the Office of the Commissioner of Banking. To facilitate the establishment of the HKMA, the Legislative Council passed amendments to the Exchange Fund Ordinance in 1992 empowering the Financial Secretary to appoint a Monetary Authority.

The powers, functions and responsibilities of the Monetary Authority are set out in the Exchange Fund Ordinance, the Banking Ordinance and other relevant Ordinances. The division of functions and responsibilities in monetary and financial affairs between the Financial Secretary and the Monetary Authority is set out in an Exchange of Letters between the two dated 25 June 2003. This Exchange of Letters also discloses the delegations made by the Financial Secretary to the Monetary Authority under these Ordinances. The letters are public documents: copies of them may be found on the HKMA website.

The Exchange Fund Ordinance establishes the Exchange Fund under the control of the Financial Secretary. According to the Ordinance, the Fund shall be used primarily for affecting the exchange value of the Hong Kong dollar. It may also be used for maintaining the stability and integrity of the monetary and financial systems of Hong Kong, with a view to maintaining Hong Kong as an international financial centre.

The Monetary Authority is appointed under the Exchange Fund Ordinance to assist the Financial

Secretary in performing his functions under the Exchange Fund Ordinance and to perform such other functions as are assigned by other Ordinances or by the Financial Secretary. The office of the Monetary Authority is known as the HKMA and the Monetary Authority as the Chief Executive of the HKMA.

The Banking Ordinance provides the Monetary Authority with the responsibility and powers for regulating and supervising banking business and the business of taking deposits. Under the Ordinance, the Monetary Authority is responsible, among other things, for the authorization of licensed banks, restricted licence banks, and deposit-taking institutions in Hong Kong.

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## THE HKMA AND THE HONG KONG SAR GOVERNMENT

The HKMA is an integral part of the Hong Kong SAR Government, but is able to employ staff on terms different from those of the civil service in order to attract personnel of the right experience and expertise. The Chief Executive of the HKMA remains a public officer, as do his staff. In its day-to-day work the HKMA operates with a high degree of autonomy within the relevant statutory powers conferred upon, or delegated to, the Monetary Authority.

The Financial Secretary is responsible for determining the monetary policy objective and the structure of the monetary system of Hong Kong: A letter from the Financial Secretary to the

Monetary Authority dated 25 June 2003 specifies that these should be currency stability defined as a stable exchange value at around HK\$7.80 to one US dollar maintained by Currency Board arrangements. The Monetary Authority is on his own responsible for achieving the monetary policy objective, including determining the strategy, instruments and operational means for doing so. He is also responsible for maintaining the stability and integrity of the monetary system of Hong Kong.

The Financial Secretary, assisted by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, has responsibility for policies for maintaining the stability and integrity of Hong Kong's financial system and the status of Hong Kong as an international financial centre. In support of these policies, the Monetary Authority is responsible, among other things, for

- promoting the general stability and effective working of the banking system
- promoting the development of the debt market, in co-operation with other relevant bodies
- matters relating to the issuance and circulation of legal tender notes and coins
- promoting the safety and efficiency of the financial infrastructure through the development of payment, clearing and settlement systems and, where appropriate, the operation of these systems
- seeking to promote, in co-operation with other relevant bodies, confidence in Hong Kong's monetary and financial systems, and appropriate market development initiatives to help strengthen the international competitiveness of Hong Kong's financial services.

The Exchange Fund is under the control of the Financial Secretary. The Monetary Authority, under delegation from the Financial Secretary, is responsible to the Financial Secretary for the use of the Exchange Fund, and for the investment management of the Fund.

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## ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The autonomy given to the HKMA in its day-to-day operations, and in the methods it uses to pursue policy objectives determined by the Government, is complemented by a high degree of accountability and transparency.

The HKMA serves Hong Kong by promoting monetary and banking stability, by managing the official reserves effectively, and by developing a robust and diverse financial infrastructure. These processes help to strengthen Hong Kong's role as an international financial centre and to foster Hong Kong's economic well-being. The HKMA must have the confidence of the community if it is to perform its duties well. The HKMA therefore takes seriously the duty of explaining its policies and work to the general public and makes every effort to address any concerns within the community relevant to the HKMA's responsibilities.

The HKMA is accountable to the people of Hong Kong through the Financial Secretary, who appoints the Monetary Authority, and through the laws passed by the Legislative Council that set out the Monetary Authority's powers and responsibilities. The HKMA also recognises a broader responsibility to promote a better understanding of its roles and objectives and to keep itself informed of community concerns. In its day-to-day operations and in its wider contacts with the community, the HKMA pursues a policy of transparency and accessibility. This policy has two main objectives:

- to keep the financial industry and the public as fully informed about the work of the HKMA as possible, subject to considerations of market sensitivity, commercial confidentiality and statutory restrictions on disclosure of confidential information
- to ensure that the HKMA is in touch with, and responsive to, the community it serves.

The HKMA seeks to follow international best practices in its transparency arrangements. It maintains extensive relations with the mass media

and produces a range of regular and special publications in both English and Chinese. The HKMA's bilingual website ([www.hkma.gov.hk](http://www.hkma.gov.hk)) carries all HKMA's publications, press releases, speeches and presentations, in addition to special sections on research, statistics, consumer information and other topics. The HKMA maintains an Information Centre at its offices, consisting of a library and an exhibition area, which is open to the public six days a week. The HKMA also organises an annual public education programme, which seeks to inform the public, and in particular students, about the work of the HKMA through seminars and guided tours at the Information Centre. The HKMA's weekly *Viewpoint* column, carried on the HKMA website and in about ten Hong Kong newspapers, informs the public about aspects of the HKMA's work. Further information on the HKMA's media work, publications and public education programmes is contained in the Chapter on Professional and Corporate Services on page 123.

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Over the years the HKMA has progressively increased the detail and frequency of its disclosure of information on the Exchange Fund and Currency Board Accounts. Since 1999 the HKMA has participated in the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard project for central banks. The HKMA publishes records of meetings of the Exchange Fund Advisory Committee's Sub-Committee on Currency Board Operations, along with the monthly reports on Currency Board operations. The supervisory policies and guidelines on banking have been published on the website since 1996.

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The relations between the HKMA and the Legislative Council play an important part in the process of accountability and transparency. There is a formal commitment from the Chief Executive of the HKMA to appear before the Legislative Council Panel on Financial Affairs three times a year to brief Members and to answer questions on the HKMA's

work. At one of these briefings, usually in May, the HKMA's Annual Report is presented. In addition, staff from the HKMA attend Legislative Council Panel meetings to explain and discuss particular issues, and Committee meetings to assist Members in their scrutiny of draft legislation.

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## ADVISORY AND OTHER COMMITTEES

### Exchange Fund Advisory Committee

In his control of the Exchange Fund, the Financial Secretary is advised by the Exchange Fund Advisory Committee (EFAC). EFAC is established under Section 3(1) of the Exchange Fund Ordinance, which requires the Financial Secretary to consult the Committee in his exercise of control of the Exchange Fund. The Financial Secretary is ex officio chairman of EFAC. Other members, including the Monetary Authority, are appointed in a personal capacity by the Financial Secretary under the delegated authority of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR. Members of EFAC are appointed for the expertise and experience that they can bring to the committee. Such expertise and experience includes knowledge of monetary, financial and economic affairs and of investment issues, as well as of accounting, management, business and legal matters.

EFAC advises the Financial Secretary on investment policies and strategies for the Fund and on projects, such as the development of financial infrastructure, that are charged to the Fund. Since the operating and staff costs of the HKMA are also chargeable to the Exchange Fund, EFAC advises the Financial Secretary on the HKMA's annual administration budget and on the terms and conditions of service of HKMA staff. EFAC meets regularly and on other occasions when particular advice is being sought.

EFAC is assisted in its work by three specialised sub-committees, which monitor specific areas of the HKMA's work and report and make recommendations to EFAC.

*The Sub-Committee on Currency Board Operations* monitors and reports on the Currency Board arrangements that underpin Hong Kong's Linked Exchange Rate system. It is responsible, among other things, for ensuring that Currency Board operations are in accordance with established policy, recommending improvements to the Currency Board system, and ensuring a high degree of transparency in the operation of the system. The Sub-Committee is composed of members of EFAC, a representative of the Hong Kong Association of Banks, additional members with expertise on the Currency Board system, and senior HKMA staff. Records of the Sub-Committee's meetings and the reports on Currency Board operations submitted monthly to the Sub-Committee are published.

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The *Remuneration and Finance Sub-Committee* makes recommendations to EFAC on pay and conditions of service, human resources policy, and budgetary and administrative issues. The Sub-Committee is composed of six non-official non-banking Members of EFAC.

The *Audit Sub-Committee* reviews and reports to EFAC on the HKMA's financial reporting process and the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control systems of the HKMA. The Sub-Committee reviews the HKMA's financial statements, and the composition and accounting principles adopted in such statements. It also examines and reviews with both the external and internal auditors the scope and results of their audits. The Sub-Committee consists of four non-executive, non-official members of EFAC. It held three meetings in 2003.

### **The Banking Advisory Committee**

The Banking Advisory Committee is established under Section 4(1) of the Banking Ordinance to advise the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR on matters relating to the Banking Ordinance, in particular matters relating to banks and the carrying on of banking business. The Committee consists of the Financial Secretary, who is the

chairman, the Monetary Authority, and other persons appointed by the Financial Secretary under the delegated authority of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR.

### **The Deposit-Taking Companies Advisory Committee**

The Deposit-Taking Companies Advisory Committee is established under Section 5(1) of the Banking Ordinance to advise the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR on matters relating to the Banking Ordinance, in particular matters relating to deposit-taking companies and restricted licence banks and the carrying on of a business of taking deposits by them. The Committee consists of the Financial Secretary, who is the chairman, the Monetary Authority, and other persons appointed by the Financial Secretary under the delegated authority of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR.

### **Chief Executive's Committee**

The Chief Executive's Committee is chaired by the Chief Executive of the HKMA and consists of the Deputy Chief Executives and the Executive Directors of the HKMA. The Committee meets weekly to report to the Chief Executive on the progress of major tasks being undertaken by the various departments of the HKMA and to advise him on policy matters relating to the operations of the HKMA.

*The membership lists of the various Committees and Sub-Committees are given on pages 14 to 22. Brief biographies and the Code of Conduct for EFAC Members can be found on the HKMA website. A Register of Members' Interests, which contains the declarations of interests by Members of EFAC, is available for public inspection during office hours (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday and 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon Saturday) at the HKMA, 55th Floor, Two International Finance Centre, 8 Finance Street, Central, Hong Kong.*

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