

## **Office of the Communications Authority Major Tasks and Projects for 2024-25**

Major tasks and projects are categorised into “priority” and “normal” ones to indicate their relative importance.

### **I. Priority Tasks/Projects**

#### **(1) Support to the Communications Authority (CA)**

1. We will continue to support the CA to enable it to assume the full spectrum of its regulatory functions.

#### **(2) Continued Support to the Fifth Generation (5G) Development**

2. In 2019, a total of about 4 500 MHz of spectrum suitable for deployment of 5G services in various high and mid frequency bands (i.e. 4 100 MHz of spectrum in the 26/28 GHz bands, 200 MHz in the 3.5 GHz band, 100 MHz in the 3.3 GHz band and 80 MHz in the 4.9 GHz band) was made available to the market. With 380 MHz of mid-band spectrum in the 3.3 GHz, 3.5 GHz and 4.9 GHz bands and 1 200 MHz of high-band spectrum in the 26/28 GHz bands assigned to the mobile network operators (MNOs), 5G services were commercially launched in April 2020. Since then, rollout of 5G networks and take up of 5G services by consumers have continued to progress. As at December 2023, 5G coverage in Hong Kong has reached over 90% of the population, and even up to 99% in core business districts, covering urban areas and all mass transit railway (MTR) lines.

3. In order to meet the growing needs of innovative 5G applications in terms of speed, capacity and coverage, the CA further assigned 80 MHz of new spectrum in the 4.9 GHz band and 70 MHz of new spectrum in the 700 MHz band to MNOs in December 2021 and June 2022 respectively. Apart from the assignment of the new spectrum in the low and mid frequency bands, we will support the CA to administratively assign the remaining 2 500 MHz of high-band spectrum in the 26/28 GHz bands in around mid-2024.

4. In addition, we have been vacating 400 MHz of spectrum in the 6/7 GHz band for the provision of public mobile services. Being the largest remaining block of the mid-band spectrum available for mobile services, the 6/7 GHz band will enable the deployment of 5G network and services with

speed and capacity vital to the future sustainable development of digital economy and mobile broadband connectivity. Taking into account the views received from the public consultations completed in August 2023, the CA and Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (SCED) announced the decisions on the arrangements for spectrum assignment and related spectrum utilisation fee (SUF) in February 2024. As announced in the 2023 Policy Address, a total of 510 MHz of spectrum will be provided for public mobile communications services to further improve the transmission speed of 5G networks. The CA plans to conduct the auction by the end of 2024 for the new assignment of spectrum in the 6/7 GHz band.

5. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) decided on the harmonised regional and global spectrum allocation for 5G services at its World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC) held from 20 November to 15 December 2023 (WRC-23). We attended the conference and will take follow-up actions to ensure compliance with the decisions and recommendations made by ITU as applicable to Hong Kong. In particular, WRC-23 has identified the 6 425 – 7 125 MHz band for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) services, including 5G services, in Region 1 (Europe and Africa) and some countries in Region 2 (Americas) and Region 3 (Asia and Oceania), while the 7 025 – 7 125 MHz band has been identified for IMT services in Region 3. We will continue to identify and make available other suitable spectrum for the development of 5G and other innovative services in Hong Kong.

6. To assess 5G's economic contribution, Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) conducted a consultancy study to quantify how 5G services and applications would benefit the economy of Hong Kong. Ernst & Young was awarded the contract and the study was completed in Q1 2024. According to the study, it is estimated that the total incremental Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contribution from 5G in 2027 would be HK\$22 billion, representing a GDP growth of 0.71%. The total incremental job impact from 5G in 2027 is estimated to be 13 619 jobs, representing 0.36% of total labour market.

### **(3) Encouraging the Early Deployment of 5G**

7. On 5 May 2020, we launched the Subsidy Scheme for Encouraging Early Deployment of 5G under the second round of Anti-epidemic Fund. The scheme aimed to encourage various sectors, through the provision of financial incentives, to deploy 5G technology early to foster innovation and smart city applications, thereby improving their operation efficiency and service quality as well as enhancing Hong Kong's overall competitiveness. The scheme received enthusiastic responses across

different sectors with its application deadline being extended several times until 31 December 2022. In total, over 170 applications involving a subsidy of more than \$78 million were approved, covering projects of various sectors including construction, building facilities management, environmental protection, education, e-sports, entertainment and recreation, transport, etc. OFCA will continue to monitor the completion of the approved project.

#### **(4) Facilitating Infrastructure Rollout**

8. With the support of relevant Government departments, we launched a pilot scheme in March 2019 to facilitate MNOs to install radio base stations (RBSs) at Government premises. Having considered MNOs' suggestions and taking into account the technical feasibility and location of different venues, the Government has opened up about 1 500 venues managed by different Government departments across different regions of Hong Kong to allow MNOs to install RBSs with a streamlined application procedure and nominal rent (\$1 per year). OFCA will review the list of venues timely, to ensure that the streamlined application procedure effectively increases 5G coverage and continue to provide support to the operators, relevant Government departments and site managers of selected Government venues to help expedite the approval process and installation work.

9. The Government has also established a mechanism to facilitate the installation of RBSs at sheltered bus stops and public payphone kiosks by MNOs, and will reserve space and loading capacity at multi-functional smart lampposts in various districts for the installation of RBSs, with a view to facilitating a broader expansion of 5G network coverage.

10. In addition, the Legislative Council passed the amendments to the Telecommunications Ordinance (TO) (Cap. 106) on 21 February 2024 to implement the initiative announced in the 2022 Policy Address to enhance 5G infrastructure by allowing access for MNOs to install mobile communications facilities in reserved space in new or redeveloped specified buildings in future. In relation to the above initiative, OFCA has formulated a Code of Practice for the Provision of Mobile Access Facilities in Specified Buildings for the Provision of Public Mobile Radiocommunications Services which will set out the requirements for the provision of the mobile communications facilities in specified buildings by MNOs.

11. The 2023 Policy Address also announced that the 5G network capacity at major public event venues will be enhanced. OFCA has worked with MNOs to facilitate installation of RBSs at venues including the Central Harbourfront Event Space, Hong Kong Coliseum, Hong Kong Convention

and Exhibition Centre, AsiaWorld-Expo and Kai Tak Sports Park, etc. OFCA will work with relevant government departments and site managers of the venues with a view to completing the works at these venues within 2024. OFCA will also implement enhancement works together with the MNOs at other sites where necessary.

12. In support of another policy initiative under the 2023 Policy Address, OFCA is formulating details of the proposed subsidy scheme to provide financial incentives for MNOs to establish mobile network infrastructure and facilities in rural and remote areas. Taking into account MNOs' inputs, OFCA targets to conduct stakeholders consultation in 2024 to hammer out detailed arrangements for implementing the programme.

#### **(5) Rollout of High Speed Broadband Services to Rural and Remote Areas**

13. In support of the Government's policy initiative, we implemented a subsidy scheme with a funding of \$770 million to provide financial incentives for fixed network operators (FNOs) to extend their fibre-based networks to 235 villages in remote areas. Following the award of all six tender projects under the scheme between November 2019 and May 2020, the selected FNOs have commenced their construction works and are extending their fibre-based networks to the villages concerned in phases from 2021 onwards. As of August 2023, network extensions to 128 villages and rollout of three submarine cables have been completed. OFCA will continue to monitor the implementation for the six projects to be completed in phases by 2026.

#### **(6) Protection of Underground Telecommunications Infrastructure**

14. Pursuant to sections 18A and 22A of the Telecommunications Ordinance, it is a criminal offence for any person who does not take reasonable steps and measures to protect or prevent damage to an underground telecommunications line when carrying out any underground work near the line. The CA issued the guidelines on work near underground telecommunications lines in February 2022 to provide relevant stakeholders with practical guidance for compliance with the new provisions. Since a working party shall, in accordance with the guidelines, appoint a competent person to conduct detection work for underground telecommunications line, OFCA has engaged two training institutions to offer relevant training courses since March 2022 for practitioners to undertake in order to be qualified as competent persons. As of September 2023, more than 680 persons have attended the training courses and over 310 of them are registered as competent persons. Separately, from the commencement of the new provisions until September 2023, there were five successful prosecution

cases where the defendants were convicted and fined by the courts. We will continue to enforce the relevant provisions and the guidelines for enhancing protection of underground telecommunications lines.

### **(7) Chung Hom Kok Teleport**

15. A satellite operator has been allocated with a land lot in Chung Hom Kok Teleport for relocation of its existing satellite facilities operating in the 3.5 GHz band for telemetry, tracking and control of satellites in orbits from Tai Po to Chung Hom Kok Teleport. It is anticipated that the limitations of using the 3.5 GHz band for 5G services in the restriction zone in Tai Po could be completely resolved before the end of 2024. In addition, Lands Department awarded by tender three land lots at Chung Hom Kok in March 2022, August 2022 and March 2023 for establishing external telecommunications facilities. We will continue to work with relevant Government departments and the operators to facilitate the development of these land lots in Chung Hom Kok Teleport for external telecommunications infrastructure with a view to further enhancing the overall capacity and diversion capability of Hong Kong's external telecommunications network.

### **(8) Review of the Use of Telephone Exchange Sites**

16. The Chief Executive in Council decided in April 2019 in principle not to extend or renew the existing land grants for use as telephone exchanges and other telecommunications-related facilities upon expiry of their respective terms. For the 42 sites where land grants will expire in June 2025 (the Sites), OFCA has reviewed the representations submitted by relevant lessees in light of technical information and findings obtained from the consultancy study in 2021 as well as further information obtained from site inspections. To facilitate the Government's consideration of the arrangement of the Sites upon expiry of the term of the leases, OFCA has appointed a consultant to review the latest proposals from lessees and give advice on the matter.

### **(9) Re-assignment of Spectrum for Mobile Services**

17. The existing frequency assignment of 90 MHz of spectrum in the 2.5/2.6 GHz band will expire in March 2024 and will be re-assigned according to the results of auction conducted in October 2021. To remove the spectrum fragmentation in the 2.5/2.6 GHz band upon the spectrum re-assignment in March 2024, the CA approved a joint request from the relevant MNOs on a spectrum swap and a spectrum transfer in the band in November 2023 which will result in more efficient use of spectrum. OFCA will continue to coordinate with the existing and new assignees of the spectrum

in the 2.5/2.6 GHz band, through a technical working group set up in September 2022, to ensure smooth handover of the spectrum concerned in March 2024.

18. The existing assignments of 20 MHz of spectrum in the 850/900 MHz bands and 90 MHz of spectrum in the 2.3 GHz band will expire in May 2026 and March 2027 respectively. The CA and SCED announced in May 2023 their respective decisions on the arrangements for the spectrum re-assignment and the related SUF after considering the comments received from the public consultation completed in August 2022. To take forward the 2023 Policy Address initiative on the provision of 510 MHz of spectrum mentioned above, OFCA plans to conduct the auction by the end of 2024 for the re-assignment of spectrum in the 850/900 MHz and 2.3 GHz bands.

**(10) Full Implementation of the Real-name Registration (RNR) Programme for Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) Cards**

19. With the full implementation of the RNR Programme for SIM Cards (RNR Programme) on 24 February 2023, all SIM cards (including SIM service plans and pre-paid SIM cards) issued and used for local person-to-person communications (including voice, data and/or SMS services) shall comply with RNR requirements and complete registration of all relevant SIM cards before service activation. The CA has issued guidelines to provide practical and administrative guidance to telecommunications service providers for implementation of the RNR Programme in compliance with the Telecommunications (Registration of SIM Cards) Regulation (Cap. 106AI). OFCA will continue to work with telecommunications service providers to enhance the registration platforms taking into account the operational experiences since the implementation of the RNR Programme, and to conduct regular sample checks on the registration information to safeguard the integrity of the registration records. OFCA will also continue to conduct market surveillance and publicity activities to enhance public awareness of the requirements of the RNR Programme.

**(11) Regulation of Telecommunications Services and Equipment**

20. With the support of OFCA and other Government departments, PCCW-HKT Telephone Limited and Hong Kong Telecommunications (HKT) Limited (HKT), the universal service provider (USP) which is responsible for providing public payphone service, has been conducting a trial of smart payphone kiosk (Smart Kiosk) since March 2023 in order to rejuvenate traditional kiosk-type public payphones. The trial involves the installation of two Smart Kiosks in Causeway Bay and Central in April and May 2023 respectively. Apart from providing public payphone and free

Wi-Fi services, the Smart Kiosks are equipped with various features and information services. These include USB charging port, transportation services and public facilities available in the vicinity, contact information of social welfare services tips for caregivers, as well as news and weather information, all accessible to the public free-of-charge. HKT will review the responses and feedback from the public after the trial period. OFCA will continue the necessary coordination with HKT.

### **(12) Tackling Fraudulent Calls and Messages**

21. With a view to safeguarding the integrity of telecommunications services and the security of communications networks, OFCA has been adopting a multi-pronged approach in collaboration with the law enforcement agencies and telecommunications operators to combat fraudulent calls and messages. In view of the growing prevalence of telephone scam cases, OFCA took the lead to set up a working group with the Police and telecommunications operators to formulate a series of new measures to tackle fraudulent calls from the telecommunications perspective. Such measures include (a) the implementation of voice/text alerts for incoming external calls with “+852” as calling line identity (CLI) prefix; (b) updating relevant guidelines to provide practical guidance to telecommunications operators to block external “+852” calls involving suspicious/spoofed CLI; (c) setting up a liaison protocol between the Police and telecommunications operators to facilitate blocking or suspension of telecommunications services of numbers being used in suspected deception cases and blocking of access to fraudulent websites based on the Police’s information; (d) establishing the “SMS Sender Registration Scheme” for transmission and delivery of trusted SMS from registered senders to subscribers of public mobile services in Hong Kong; and (e) promulgating a code of practice to provide practical guidance to telecommunications service providers in managing suspected scam calls made and scam SMS sent from local telecommunications networks and systems. In support of the above measures, OFCA assisted the CA in introducing a new licence condition and revising relevant codes of practice to clarify the regulatory basis for the blocking of transmission or delivery of fraudulent calls and messages. OFCA will continue to collaborate with the Police and telecommunications operators to enhance publicity and public education through different channels, such as issuing press releases and consumer alerts, broadcasting TV and radio announcements in public interest, and organising exhibitions, community talks, school drama performances and other consumer education programmes, etc.

### **(13) Regulation of Broadcasting Services and Equipment**

22. With the Government's policy support, OFCA has identified and assigned a number of FM frequencies to Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) since June 2022 for the provision of a new FM programme channel (i.e. Radio The Greater Bay) on a territory-wide coverage basis. All the FM frequency coordination work between OFCA and the Mainland authorities was successfully completed in November 2023. We will assign the remaining required FM frequencies to RTHK for territory-wide coverage of the new FM programme channel by the end of 2024.

### **(14) Broadcasting Survey**

23. Six major broadcasting licences (three domestic free television programme service (free TV), one domestic pay television programme service and two sound broadcasting) are due to expire in 2027 and 2028. In preparation for the upcoming licence renewal exercise, we will engage a survey firm to conduct broadcasting service survey within 2024 (with around 1 500 members of the public by random sampling) to gauge the viewing and listening habits of the public and their feedback regarding broadcasting services so that we can better factor these in when handling the licence renewal applications.

## **II. Other Routine Tasks/Projects**

### **(1) Regulation of Telecommunications Services and Equipment**

24. We will continue to provide support to the CA in handling Unified Carrier Licence (UCL) applications and licence administration matters.

25. Currently, the Localised Wireless Broadband Service (LWBS) Licence is issued to facilitate the entry of a wide range of service providers and the development of various innovative 5G services and applications for the assignment of the Shared Spectrum in the 26/28 GHz bands. The Shared Spectrum is intended to be assigned for use in different specified locations such as university campuses, industrial estates, the airport and technology parks on a geographically sharing basis, subject to the restriction that the total network coverage of each assignee shall not exceed 50 square kilometres. The first LWBS Licence was issued to the Airport Authority in October 2019 for implementation of the smart airport initiatives. In addition, the Localised Wireless Broadband System (Private) Licence (LWBS (Private) Licence), with more light-handed regulation and a lower level of licence fee as



compared with the LWBS Licence, given that its scope of operation is limited to private use and is of a smaller scale, is issued in order to facilitate the use of the Shared Spectrum for the establishment of 5G systems for private use by different entities in the community, including in particular the small and medium-sized enterprises, educational institutions, research and technology institutes. OFCA will continue to adopt suitable licensing arrangement to encourage the wide and early adoption of 5G and other advanced wireless technologies for innovative applications.

26. In April 2022, the CA created a new Class Licence for 6 GHz Device which allows new wireless local area network (WLAN) devices to operate in the 6 GHz band. The CA also varied the existing Class Licence for Provision of Public Wireless Local Area Network Services to allow the use of the new 6 GHz devices for the provision of public WLAN services. Since then, such devices, commonly known as Wi-Fi 6E and Wi-Fi 7 devices, have been launched onto the local market. As at 31 December 2023, the CA has issued 64 and 28 type approval certificates for 6 GHz Wi-Fi access points and 6 GHz Wi-Fi client devices respectively. We will continue to monitor the market development and ensure the effective operation of the new 6 GHz devices in Hong Kong.

27. FNOs with manholes installed in public streets are required to follow the guidelines issued in June 2010 and revised in July 2016 in conducting inspections and implementing mitigation measures against the risk of gas explosion on their manholes in public streets. We will continue to monitor the implementation work of the operators in accordance with the requirements set out in the guidelines.

28. Internet of Things (IoT) enables the provision of communications platforms and services for interconnected devices to generate, exchange and consume data with minimal human intervention. Since the creation of the Wireless Internet of Things (WIoT) Licence by the CA in December 2017 for the provision of WIoT platforms and services with minimal human intervention using the shared frequency band of 920 – 925 MHz, four WIoT licences have been issued. Moreover, MNOs may also provide WIoT services using the spectrum assigned to them under their UCLs. With the introduction of a new WIoT device fee component under the UCL and Services-based Operator (SBO) Licence effective from 31 January 2019 and 1 August 2020 respectively, any WIoT device operated under the UCL or SBO Licence is subject to a fee of \$2 for each WIoT device, which is on a par with the fee level under the WIoT Licence. We will continue to support the CA to facilitate the development of WIoT services in the 5G era.

29. The CA reviewed and enhanced the licensing framework for

SBO licensees in 2020, through extending the period of validity of the SBO licence from one year to two years to enhance regulatory certainty, streamlining the categories of services authorised under the SBO Licence, and adopting a new licence fee structure to ensure regulatory symmetry between the SBO Licence and other licences. The enhanced framework has taken effect since 1 August 2020. To facilitate the SBO licensees to renew their licences under the enhancing framework, an automated electronic platform was launched to enable the licensees to submit and update their business information online. OFCA will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the enhanced licensing framework for SBO.

30. The Class Licence for Offer of Telecommunications Services (CLOTS) regulates persons who offer telecommunications services to the general public without establishment of any means of telecommunications. Under the previous version of the “Guidelines for Administration of CLOTS” (CLOTS Guidelines), only CLOTS licensees with a customer base of 10 000 subscriptions or more were required to register their business information with the CA. To tie in with the implementation of the RNR requirements for SIM cards, OFCA assisted the CA in updating the CLOTS Guidelines to require all CLOTS licensees intending to offer SIM services during the course of business, irrespective of the size of their customer base, to register their information with the CA before commencing the offer of SIM services. To facilitate CLOTS licensees to register with the CA under the enhanced requirements, an automated electronic platform was launched to allow the licensees to submit and update their business information online. OFCA will continue to monitor developments in the market and ensure compliance by the industry with all the regulatory requirements under the revised CLOTS Guidelines for enhancing consumer protection.

31. Following the successful implementation of two-year validity period for SBO Licence in 2020, we will implement two-year validity period for Ship Station Licence, Broadcast Radio Relay Station Licence, Hotel Television (Transmission) Licence and Satellite Master Antenna Television Licence in 2023-24 in order to provide the trades with greater certainty in business continuity and reduce the administrative burden for licence renewal.

32. Mandatory Type II Interconnection at exchange level and at buildings with more than one self-built customer access networks was withdrawn in full on 30 June 2008. We will continue to monitor the network rollout of the alternative self-built customer access networks of fixed operators.

33. To stimulate and promote further development of our broadband infrastructure, we launched a voluntary registration scheme for residential

buildings connected with fibre-based access networks in November 2010. The scheme was extended to cover non-residential buildings in April 2013. Taking into account the latest market development, the scheme was relaunched in November 2022 as the Labelling Scheme for Buildings with Optical Fibre Access to promote the awareness of the public including building owners, building management offices and property developers on the merits of having optical fibre access in their buildings. As of 31 December 2023, 63 361 residential buildings were registered with the scheme, representing about 91.8% of the total number of permanent living quarters in Hong Kong. 6 587 non-residential buildings were also registered with the scheme. We will continue to encourage participation of industry players.

34. We will continue to combat unauthorised telecommunications activities, including the sale, establishing, maintaining, possessing and/or using unauthorised telecommunications systems and devices, which are in breach of the TO, the relevant regulations and the conditions of the various telecommunications licences.

35. As at 30 September 2023, a total of 33 base stations serving country parks and the Hong Kong Geopark have been set up by mobile operators. We will continue to facilitate the installation of more base stations by these operators for improving mobile network coverage in country parks, the Hong Kong Geopark and rural areas.

36. In order to provide hikers with the necessary information on mobile network coverage in country parks and the Hong Kong Geopark, we have prepared 171 digital maps which show such coverage in those areas and posted them on our website for public information. We will continue to update the maps when new base stations are installed.

37. Since the implementation of the number fee framework in August 2008, as at 31 December 2023, a net amount of 7.73 million numbers had been returned by the operators. We will continue to facilitate the operators' return of numbers and review the usage of the numbering resources in a timely manner to promote the effective and efficient use of telecommunications numbers and codes.

38. Telecommunications licensees holding telephone numbers for the provision of fixed and mobile telephone services are required to pay universal service contribution (USC) to the USP for the net cost of meeting the universal service obligation. The last review of the level of USC for the year 2022 was completed with the results promulgated in December 2023. We will continue to calculate the USC in a fair, reasonable and efficient

manner, and promulgate the calculated USC levels on a regular basis.

39. Following the implementation of a new computerised system for processing applications for and renewals of private mobile radio systems licences (the Electronic Licensing System), we extended the system to cover all private telecommunications licences in 2021.

40. The system which enables and facilitates end users of fixed and mobile broadband services to test the performance of their broadband services was launched in December 2010 and upgraded over the years to enhance its performance and functionalities. As of 31 August 2023, an accumulated total of more than 120 million tests were performed with an average daily hit rate of 26 008. We will continue to monitor the system performance and improve it taking into account technology and market developments.

## **(2) Facilitating Infrastructure Rollout**

41. Since 2010, we have been offering a single point-of-contact service to assist operators in application for the necessary statutory approvals for landing new submarine cables in Hong Kong. The overall response of the industry is positive. Further to four regional and transcontinental submarine cable systems and two domestic submarine cable systems that had come into operation in Hong Kong since 2013, one new submarine cable system and four domestic submarine cable systems have commenced operation since 2021. Eight new regional submarine cable systems are under planning or construction and will be put into service in Hong Kong between 2024 and 2029. We will continue to provide the service to facilitate the landing of new submarine cables in Hong Kong.

42. In tandem, we will continue to facilitate MNOs to roll out their mobile broadband services by deployment of RBSs at the hill-top sites and Government buildings in remote areas.

43. A new Labelling Scheme for Buildings with 5G Indoor Coverage is being developed to provide 5G indoor coverage information to members of the public. We will work with MNOs for implementation of the scheme.

44. We have coordinated with the operators and liaised with the relevant Government departments and Mainland authorities on the operators' proposals of utilising new cross-boundary infrastructures, such as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) for installation of cross-boundary optical fibre cables to increase the capacity and enhance the diversity of their

cross-boundary facilities. Some FNOs have commenced provision of cross-boundary telecommunications services via the optical fibre cables installed along HZMB since October 2020. We will continue to coordinate the matter with the relevant parties.

### **(3) Facilitating Access**

45. We will continue to facilitate access to buildings by fixed operators for installation of in-building fixed telecommunications facilities for the conveyance of telecommunications and broadcasting services.

### **(4) Spectrum Management**

46. We will conduct frequency planning studies for a horizon of five years with a view to timely making available supply of spectrum for different wireless services and applications.

47. In July 2023, the CA updated the Spectrum Release Plan to inform the industry of the supply of 575 MHz of radio spectrum and earmarked 4 000 MHz of spectrum in the 41 GHz band for the provision of public mobile (including 5G) services. A new potential supply of spectrum in the 6 570 – 6 770 MHz and 6 910 – 7 125 MHz bands was included in the updated Spectrum Release Plan. We will continue to monitor technology and market developments and assist the CA in making available the relevant spectrum for the provision of public mobile services and other radiocommunications services.

48. To ensure the orderly development of new services and to minimise interference, we will continue to coordinate with neighbouring authorities on the use of radio spectrum for broadcasting and telecommunications services.

49. Spectrum to be used by or on behalf of the Government is managed administratively by OFCA. In February 2023, we completed the fifth review of the efficiency of the spectrum used by the Government services during the period from October 2019 to September 2022. We will continue to promote adherence with the Guidelines for Spectrum Assignment for Land Mobile Systems and Fixed Links Deployed by Government Users in Hong Kong for assigning spectrum to Government users.

50. A statement on “Spectrum Utilisation Fee for Spectrum Assigned Administratively” (the Admin SUF Statement) was issued jointly by SCED and the former Telecommunications Authority in September 2011. To promote the efficient use of spectrum, OFCA started to implement the

charging scheme for SUF for the use of spectrum assigned administratively at congested frequency bands from 1 January 2018. According to the Admin SUF Statement, review of the SUF charging scheme should be conducted every five years, with the first one to be done in 2023. In this regard, OFCA conducted a review in 2023 and consulted the industry in June 2023. The CA and SCED issued a joint statement on 8 December 2023 to promulgate their decisions in respect of the way forward of the SUF charging scheme after taking into account the outcomes of the review.

51. The radio monitoring and direction finding system for our Radio Monitoring Unit commissioned in 2001 was replaced in June 2019. We have been making use of the new system for more efficient radio monitoring and assistance in identification of interfering sources.

52. On radiation safety of RBSs, OFCA will continue to vet the applications for installing RBS in strict accordance with the non-ionizing radiation safety standard recognised by the World Health Organization. OFCA will keep in view the international developments and best practice in this regard for continual enhancement of the process for approving RBS installations in the local environment to safeguard public health whilst facilitating effective rollout of radiocommunications networks. OFCA will also continue to proactively conduct site visit at RBSs to measure radiation level and conduct radiation measurement in relevant premises in response to request of members of the public. Relevant publicity and education efforts will be stepped up to address the concern of the community over radiation emitted by the RBSs.

53. To implement the proposal in the 2023-24 Budget to provide greater incentives for MNOs to invest in mobile communications services by bidding more radio spectrum to further improve network quality, OFCA has worked with Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) and the Inland Revenue Department for amending the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112). The Inland Revenue (Amendment) (Tax Deductions for Spectrum Utilization Fees) Ordinance 2024 (Amendment Ordinance) was enacted and took effect on 19 January 2024 upon gazettal. Under the amended Ordinance, the SUF payable by MNOs for the radio spectrum acquired through bidding from 19 January 2024 onwards will be fully deductible.

#### **(5) Phasing out of Second Generation Mobile (2G) Services**

54. While 2G services are primarily using spectrum in the 900 MHz band and 1 800 MHz band, MNOs may re-farm part or all of the assigned frequency spectrum in these two bands to provide more advanced mobile

services, and some of them may consider shutting down their 2G networks for more efficient use of the spectrum. In this regard, the CA granted prior consent to two MNOs to cease their provision of 2G services and the cessations were completed in September 2021 and October 2022 respectively. In assessing the applications for the service cessation, the CA took into account the need to protect consumer interests pursuant to the relevant Special Condition under the UCL. We will keep monitoring the use of the 900 MHz and 1 800 MHz bands by the remaining MNOs for provision of 2G services and ensure that MNOs comply with their licence obligation in phasing out any generation of mobile services to safeguard consumer interest.

### **(6) Regulation of Broadcasting Services and Equipment**

55. We will continue to monitor the performance of the broadcasting licensees and ensure their compliance with the relevant legislation and licence conditions. All broadcasting licensees are required to observe the relevant codes of practice issued by the CA. During the consultation process of the mid-term review of the free TV and sound broadcasting licences, the CA received various suggestions from the public and the industry relating to the regulation of programme and advertising contents under the codes of practice issued by the CA. In response to the views collected, we assisted the CA in conducting a review of its codes of practice from February 2023 along the general direction of refining the regulatory regime to facilitate the licensees to meet the challenges of the rapidly evolving business environment. With OFCA's support, the CA completed the review and the amended codes of practice were gazetted and took effect on 15 December 2023, relaxing the regulatory regime in terms of programme sponsorship, and transmission of programmes/channels acquired from reputable sources on the Mainland, etc., as well as stipulating specific requirements for broadcasting licensees to safeguard national security in their broadcasting services in compliance with the National Security Law. We will continue to assist the CA in reviewing and revising the codes of practice as necessary.

56. By virtue of the Charter of RTHK promulgated in August 2010, RTHK should also ensure that all its TV and radio services comply with the relevant codes of practice of the CA. To ensure the compliance with the codes of practice by broadcasting licensees and RTHK, we will continue to act on complaints lodged by the public in a rigorous and transparent manner.

57. Since the launch of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) services in late 2007, a total of 29 transmitting stations have been constructed by the free TV licensees, bringing the overall DTT coverage to at least 99% of the population. We will continue to work with the relevant free TV licensees to improve the reception in the few areas in Hong Kong where DTT reception

problems are identified.

58. Following the switch-off of analogue television services on 30 November 2020, the DTT channels in the 600/700 MHz bands have been migrated to the 500 MHz band since 1 December 2021, thus making available spectrum in the 600/700 MHz bands for public mobile services. We will continue to coordinate with the Mainland authorities on the use of spectrum in the 470 – 614 MHz band for DTT services in Hong Kong.

59. We will continue to regulate the technical performance of the licensed broadcasters.

60. We will continue to improve the reception of the existing free terrestrial television and sound broadcasting in the territory, especially in areas where reception is not satisfactory.

### **(7) Competition Affairs**

61. The CA is conferred concurrent jurisdiction with the Competition Commission (the Commission) to enforce the Competition Ordinance (CO) in respect of the conduct of undertakings in the telecommunications and broadcasting sectors. The CA and the Commission have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate the performance of their functions on which they have concurrent jurisdiction under the CO. We will continue to assist the CA in enforcing the CO in the telecommunications and broadcasting sectors.

### **(8) Regulation of Unsolicited Commercial Electronic Messages**

62. The Unsolicited Electronic Messages Ordinance (UEMO) has been in operation since December 2007. We will continue to maintain the Do-not-call Registers for fax, short message and pre-recorded telephone message respectively for use by the general public, and for businesses/organisations as senders of commercial electronic messages. We will continue to handle and investigate reports of suspected contravention of the UEMO and take appropriate actions following the technology neutral principle. We will also provide support and advisory services to CEDB on spam-related issues.

63. Besides, to minimize the inconvenience that may be caused to the public by marketing calls, OFCA will work with the trade associations of the existing four sectors including finance, insurance, telecommunications and call centres to enhance their codes of practice on management of marketing calls. OFCA will also encourage trade associations of other sectors including beauty, estate agencies and money lenders to implement



similar arrangement for management of marketing calls. In addition, to help the public differentiate calls from Government departments, OFCA has provided dedicated/special telephone numbers such as 1823, 18222, etc. for use by these departments. OFCA has also encouraged the telecommunications service providers to offer call filtering services to its users and uploaded onto OFCA's thematic webpage the tips on the use of call-filtering applications on smartphones.

64. We will continue to liaise with local, Mainland and overseas anti-spam organisations and enforcement agencies to facilitate cooperation in spam control and sharing of experience and intelligence of anti-spam issues.

### **(9) Advisory and Support Services**

65. We will continue to provide support to satellite operators registered in Hong Kong by attending satellite co-ordination meetings and issuing licences for the launching and operation of new or replacement satellites.

66. We will continue our coordination with local, Mainland and overseas satellite operators and administrations on satellite launching, coordination and interference matters.

67. We will continue to provide support to the Government in overseeing the operation of the Emergency Alert System (EAS), which the Government engaged the MNOs to set up their network for dissemination of time-critical emergency messages to the public. The EAS, launched in November 2020, was established with government funding covering operation until mid-August 2025. To ensure continued operation of the EAS in the long run, a new Special Condition has been incorporated in the UCLs requiring MNOs to establish, maintain and operate the EAS at their own expenses. We will assist relevant bureau/department in disseminating emergency messages via the EAS, and monitor MNOs' operation and maintenance of the EAS.

68. We will continue to strengthen Hong Kong's participation, by both the Government and the private sectors, in international and regional telecommunications fora, and to provide support to regional/international telecommunications projects.

69. We will continue to provide support to CEDB and Trade and Industry Department (TID) on the implementation and further expansion of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement

(CEPA) and the closer co-ordination with the Mainland authorities with respect to further liberalisation measures to facilitate the Hong Kong operators to extend their provision of telecommunications services on the Mainland.

70. We will also continue to support CEDB and TID in establishing free trade agreements with other economies with a view to facilitating market access and the provision of telecommunications services.

### **(10) Technical Standards**

71. We will continue to monitor the process and performance of Local Certifications Bodies in the provision of testing and certification services under the accreditation scheme administered by OFCA.

72. We will continue to implement the Mutual Recognition Arrangement for conformity assessment of telecommunications equipment led by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Telecommunications and Information Working Group.

73. We will continue to monitor the radiation exposure limit of uncertified mobile phones supplied in the market. In 2023-24, we commissioned a laboratory to conduct measurement of the Specific Absorption Rate for 10 models of uncertified mobile phones. The tests indicated that the Specific Absorption Rate values of all the 10 models of mobile phones were below the 2W/kg limit as recommended by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection.

### **(11) Corporate Affairs and Handling of Consumer Complaints**

74. We will continue to promote the messages on staying vigilant against phone scams and smart use of communications services through the launch of the annual consumer education campaign, which offers various activities and programmes for public participation such as roving exhibitions and community talks. Consumer messages will also be publicised on different mass media channels, including the OFCA's website, the "CommBo" Facebook Fan Page, Instagram and Weibo platforms, the CA's YouTube channel and other online platforms, as well as through our joint efforts with various user groups and industry organisations.

75. On the handling of consumer complaints, we will ensure that complaints involving possible contraventions of the provisions of the TO, the Broadcasting Ordinance (BO), the UEMO, the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO) and the CO or licence conditions are attended to promptly. For

complaints which fall outside the scope of the legislative provisions and relevant licence conditions, we will ensure that they will be promptly referred to the operators concerned.

76. To help the industry, the media and the public understand the new developments in the communications market and the OFCA's new initiatives, we will continue to organise industry and media activities as necessary for effective communication.

### **(12) Consumer Protection**

77. To safeguard consumer interests in the use of telecommunications services, we take proactive actions to implement various consumer protection measures and work with the industry to draw up and implement self-regulatory mechanisms to address new consumer issues that may arise from time to time. These include the voluntary Customer Complaint Settlement Scheme (CCSS) administered by the Communications Association of Hong Kong, an industry association. The CCSS aims to help resolve billing disputes in deadlock between telecommunications service providers and their customers by means of mediation.

78. Other self-regulatory mechanisms voluntarily implemented by the industry include the promulgation of the Code for the Provision of Chargeable Mobile Content Services to govern the practices of third party content service providers, and the Code of Practice for Telecommunications Service Contracts to improve the clarity of provisions in the telecommunications service contracts. Mobile operators have also adopted a series of preventive measures promulgated by OFCA to tackle the problem of mobile bill shock. The measures implemented by individual mobile operators are published on OFCA's website.

79. In order to enhance transparency of the service level of the mobile broadband service market, mobile operators publish their performance pledges and the actual performance statistics of their mobile broadband services. The pledges and statistics are updated quarterly, and are available on the respective websites of the mobile operators and on our website via hyperlinks. Regarding service termination of residential broadband services, we publish and periodically update on our website details of the arrangements adopted by major residential broadband service providers to handle service termination requests from service subscribers.

80. The CA has issued a voluntary Code of Practice in relation to Billing Information and Payment Collection for Telecommunications Services to enhance the transparency of the pricing of chargeable items in the

provision of telecommunications services by local fixed and mobile operators. To provide guidance to fixed and mobile broadband service providers on how they may implement Fair Usage Policy, the CA has promulgated a set of mandatory guidelines setting out the relevant guiding principles for compliance by service providers.

81. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of various regulatory guidance given to the industry on the provision of service to end customers, including the Code of Practice on the Cessation Arrangements for Mobile Virtual Network Operator Services which took effect in October 2017 and the Code of Practice on the Verification of the Addresses of Potential Customers for Mobile Telecommunications Services which was revised in November 2022.

82. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the various consumer protection measures adopted, and engage the industry where necessary to seek further improvement of the existing measures or introduction of new measures. The CA is conferred concurrent jurisdiction to enforce the fair trading sections of the TDO in respect of the commercial practices of the telecommunications and broadcasting licensees which are directly connected with the provision of a telecommunications or broadcasting service under the TO or the BO. For cases involving unfair trade practices, we will take enforcement actions where warranted in accordance with the powers conferred on the CA under the TDO.

### **(13) Human Resources Management**

83. A Training and Development Committee has been established to oversee the implementation of OFCA's training and development policies to meet the training needs of staff and to strengthen arrangements for grooming officers with strong potentials. We will continue to promote a learning culture in the office and provide training opportunities for staff at all levels to enhance their professional and managerial competencies, ensure healthy succession, and keep pace with the advent of new technologies. We will also arrange local/overseas leadership and management programmes as well as training on national policies and development of the Mainland, and explore opportunities for staff attachment to policy bureaux, overseas regulatory authorities and relevant authorities in the Mainland to broaden the horizons of our staff and prepare them for greater challenges.

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