



Responding to COVID-19: BRITACOM PERSPECTIVE, 2 June 2020

Script of speech

Mr. Wong Kuen Fai, Commissioner of Inland Revenue, Hong Kong China

Thank you, Mr. Wang.

Although for the reason of social distancing, we cannot meet face to face, I wish to send my regards to all colleagues of BRITACOM, wishing good health to you and your families.

Back to the topics that we are discussing, having had the benefit of hearing the presentation of a number of participants, I notice there are a number of commonalities in the policy objectives of the initiatives deployed by different countries. First, to help businesses stay afloat and make sure that they can still operate; second, to keep workers in employment; third, to relieve the financial burdens of individuals and businesses; and fourth, to assist the economy to recover once the epidemic is contained.

I also discover there are lots of commonalities in terms of tax measures which have been deployed amongst our BRITACOM members. And I understand that the BRITACOM Secretariat has done a very good job by sharing with us the initiatives and policy measures introduced by various BRITACOM members through the issue of a number of tax newsletters.

In Hong Kong, we have also put in place a number of similar measures. I understand that our taxpayers have been watching from our back, seeing what we have done, and comparing what we have done with those employed by other tax jurisdictions - which will be good benchmark for us.

As tax administrations, we have deployed a number of tax measures to help tide over the difficulties that we encounter during the COVID-19 period. But we also need to think ahead. By which I mean the recovery strategy after the COVID-19 pandemic. The design of recovery strategy is a great challenge. There is no one size fits all strategy. Both the policy and technical details of tax incentives have to be carefully and thoroughly considered. Not only should they be targeted to meet the domestic needs, they have also to be in line with the international tax rules now being developed, in particular, the two Pillars under BEPS Action 1.

With that, I conclude my intervention by saying that I look forward to further collaboration amongst BRITACOM members in other tax areas when the threat of Covid-19 is over.

Thank you.