



Plan unveiled for truly world class waterfront

# New body can save our 'ailing' harbor

**Mary Ann Benitez**

Victoria Harbour is "an ailing business" that needs a dedicated authority to make it a truly world-class asset.

The Harbour Business Forum — which includes blue-chip companies among its members — proposes that a powerful agency be set up under a six-point integrated business plan to make the harbor a "genuinely vibrant, accessible and sustainable world-class asset."

The proposals were made as part of the forum's latest search for an integrated approach to the planning, development and management of the harbor.

In presenting the study's findings, Fiona Waters, director of GHK (HK), said the harbor helps to differentiate Hong Kong from any other city in the mainland but that it is like "an ailing business."

GHK, a consultancy firm, conducted the study for Harbour Business Forum in association with Townland and Urbis.

Waters said the current state of the harbor is undermining competitiveness.

"Unfortunately, the reality is not that of a world-class waterfront," she said. This is because Hong Kong lacks the governance, planning and delivery systems to enact lasting change.

"We need more than just another land-

use plan. We need an entirely new approach," she said. "Our proposed approach has six key components, all are necessary and all complement one another."

These components are: a harbor policy; a vision; a strategic framework and plan; a single entity accountable for the harbor; and changes in the planning and delivery systems. The forum proposed that an interim harbor committee be set up next year and an autonomous harbor agency in 2014.

The study found the harbor suffers from inappropriate land use, is generally inaccessible, lacks attractions and destinations along the waterfront, and has poor design and amenities.

"There are many opportunities ahead at Kai Tak, Central and West Kowloon cultural district but there is concern that Hong Kong is repeating many of the mistakes made in the past," Waters said.

HSBC Asia-Pacific chairman Vincent Cheng Hoi-chuen, a founder of the forum, said: "This is a business case for change through a step-by-step approach that will help us protect one of Hong Kong's greatest assets."

Margaret Brooke, chair of the forum's best practice committee, said the study should not be taken as criticism of the government.

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