

**Business Facilitation Advisory Committee
Task Force on Business Liaison Groups**

***Implementation of Unique Business Identifier and
Next Generation of Integrated Companies Registry Information System***

Purpose

This paper briefs members on the implementation of the Unique Business Identifier (UBI) and the Next Generation of Integrated Companies Registry Information System (Revamped ICRIS).

UBI

Background

2. UBI has been adopted in many other economies around the world, enabling governments and businesses to uniquely identify legal entities in various transactions and regulatory interactions. UBI reduces possible errors caused by the use of different identifiers in identifying the same entity and in turn, helps communication and exchange of data across government departments and businesses. UBI also helps governments to enhance public service delivery and regulate the entities more effectively. For businesses, UBI can be used in legal and financial documents and contracts to uniquely identify the entities involved.

3. In order to sustain Hong Kong's leading position as an international financial centre, the Government decided to adopt UBI. After discussion among the Efficiency Office, the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) and the Companies Registry (CR), the business registration number (BRN) (i.e. the first eight digits of the Business Registration Certificate number) assigned by the Business Registration Office of the IRD will be adopted as the UBI of companies/ entities.

Implementation of UBI

4. CR implements the UBI initiative by two phases for entities under the administration of the Registrar of Companies. The first phase was implemented for limited partnership funds with effect from 1 November 2021. The second phase will be implemented simultaneously with the launch of the CR's revamped information system on **27 December 2023** and extended to cover the following companies and entities:

- companies incorporated or registered under the Companies Ordinance (Chapter 622);
- open-ended fund companies incorporated or registered under Part IVA of the Securities and Futures Ordinance (Chapter 571);
- limited partnerships registered under the Limited Partnerships Ordinance (Chapter 37);
- registered trustees corporations incorporated under the Registered Trustees Incorporation Ordinance (Chapter 306); and
- other companies or entities formed or registered under various Ordinances administered by the Registrar of Companies.

5. For companies incorporated/registered on or after 27 December 2023, the BRN will be adopted as the “No.” on the “Certificate of Incorporation” or “Certificate of Registration of Non-Hong Kong Company” issued by CR. CR will revise all relevant specified forms, where reporting of existing company registration number will be replaced by BRN. Our revamped system will also adopt BRN as the key number for searching and identifying a company or entity.

Revamped ICRIS

Background

6. The Integrated Companies Registry Information System (the ICRIS), first launched in 2005, is the core information system of CR. To achieve the vision of

providing quality services to customers and meeting rising public expectations, the ICRIS has undergone continuous enhancements over the years to cater for legislative and procedural changes and provide a wide range of electronic services, such as electronic company search services and electronic document filing services, through the Cyber Search Centre, the Company Search Mobile Service, the e-Registry and the “CR eFiling” mobile application.

7. To keep pace with rapid technological trends and advances, CR is pressing ahead the development project of the Revamped ICRIS for completion by end-2023. The project seeks to revamp the existing information systems for developing a single integrated online platform that supports the CR’s core business operations as well as electronic services in future. With the enhanced platform commonality integrating features and settings across the Registry’s different services, customers will be able to interact with CR more easily. The Revamped ICRIS will also be capable of supporting various new initiatives being implemented and in the pipeline that seek to refine the robustness of the company registration system as well as corporate governance regulatory functions of CR.

New Features of the Revamped ICRIS

8. The e-services provided to customers will be enhanced to include, among others, the following new features/functions:

- a single integrated online platform allowing customers to access different services, namely e-filing, e-search and application for disclosure of withheld information/protected information by a single log-on with a unified account;
- a unified account structure for customers to register and subscribe different e-services under a single account and settle the required fees for different services by the same deposit account;
- responsive design of the new service portal enables users to access e-services with desktop and mobile devices with different screen sizes;
- a dedicated page for easy access by frequent users to the e-Filing functions for incorporation applications, registration of non-Hong Kong companies and change of company names;

- web forms will be provided for completion online where drafts can be saved on the portal for subsequent review and alterations before submission;
- a quick search function for searching the corresponding UBI of an existing company number; and
- functions for data subjects to apply to CR for protecting from public inspection their full identification numbers and residential addresses contained in documents registered with CR, and replace such information with their correspondence addresses and partial identification numbers for public inspection purpose.

Launch of the Revamped ICRIS

9. The Revamped ICRIS will be launched on 27 December 2023. Relevant information will be disseminated to different stakeholders in due course before the launch.

10. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Companies Registry
August 2023