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Dear Friends,

Letter from Hong Kong

We thank all of you who have shown support for Hong Kong at this time. There is encouraging news: the World Health Organisation is confident the worst is over for Hong Kong with Sars (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). The number of cases is "on the way down and will stay down", says the WHO. On several recent days, the number of recovered people discharged from hospital significantly outnumbered new cases.

Some have asked if they can confidently conduct trade with Hong Kong at this time. The answer is a resounding "yes" for the following reasons:

- *Goods and mail* from Hong Kong do not pose a health risk. That is a World Health Organisation fact (http://www.who.int/csr/sars/goods2003_04_10/en/).
- *Production is going on as usual* in Hong Kong's widespread network of factories in the Chinese mainland and elsewhere.
- *Trade fairs are going ahead* in Hong Kong for an extended spring buying season, with stringent health protection measures in place. Good business is being done at Hong Kong's combined fairs for houseware, gifts and premium (April 28 - May 1). Overseas exhibitors and buyers have been welcomed with open arms, VIP treatment and attractive travel packages (click <http://www.hktrader.net/100001/sars1.htm> for their comments).
- *Life is going on in Hong Kong*, with people going to work every day and schools re-opening.
- *Nimble and innovative Hong Kong firms* are finding new ways to connect with overseas customers. This includes visiting Chinese mainland factories on their customers' behalf and setting up temporary showrooms overseas.

The Hong Kong Trade Development Council, too, has stepped forward with practical initiatives such as web conferencing, virtual exhibitions and catalogue shows to make it easier to reach Hong Kong partners. Click http://www.tdctrade.com/dm2/practicalways_english/practicalways_english.htm for details.

The entire Hong Kong community is working to overcome this problem. Fighting Sars is also the top priority on the Chinese mainland, with which there is close cooperation. High-tech thermal screening has been installed at Hong Kong's land crossings. Temperature checks and health screening at Hong Kong's airport are restoring confidence in international air travel.

It would be a tremendous help if you would pass these messages on. You will also find important updates on our portal www.tdctrade.com and online newsletter www.hktrader.net.

Yours sincerely,
The Hong Kong Trade Development Council