# TAXATION AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE

#### PRC TAXATION

#### **Taxation on Dividends**

#### Individual Investors

Under the provisions of the Individual Income Tax Law of the PRC (《中華人民共和國個人所得稅法》), last amended on August 31, 2018, and the Regulations on Implementation of the Individual Income Tax Law of the PRC (《中華人民共和國個人所得稅法實施條例》), last amended on December 18, 2018 (referred to as the "IIT Law"), dividends disbursed by Chinese enterprises are subject to a flat individual income tax rate of 20%. For foreign individuals who are not residents of China, dividends received from a Chinese enterprise are generally taxed at 20%, unless there are specific exemptions granted by the State Council's tax authority or reductions under an applicable tax treaty.

Additionally, a specific tax treatment applies to dividends and bonuses received from listed companies, as outlined in the Notice on Issues Concerning the Implementation of Differential Individual Income Tax Policies on Dividends and Bonuses of Listed Companies (《關於上市公司股息紅利差別化個人所得税政策有關問題的通知》) issued on September 7, 2015. According to this notice, individuals acquiring stocks of a listed company through public offering or the stock market are subject to different tax rates based on their holding period. If the holding period exceeds 1 year, the income from dividends and bonuses is exempt from individual income tax. If the holding period is 1 month or less, the full income from dividends and bonuses is included in taxable income. For holding periods between 1 month and 1 year, 50% of the income from dividends and bonuses is temporarily included in taxable income. The individual income tax rate on this income is a flat 20%.

In accordance with the Arrangement between the Mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion(《內地和香港特別行政區關於對所得避免雙重徵税和防止偷漏税的安排》),signed on August 21, 2006, the PRC Government has the authority to impose taxes on dividends paid by a PRC company to Hong Kong residents, including both natural persons and legal entities. The tax levied shall not exceed 10% of the total dividends payable by the PRC company. However, if a Hong Kong resident directly holds 25% or more of the equity interest in a PRC company and meets certain conditions as the beneficial owner of the equity, the tax imposed shall not exceed 5% of the total dividends payable by the PRC company.

The Fifth Protocol of the Arrangement between the Mainland of China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion (《<內地和香港特別行政區關於對所得避免雙重徵税和防止偷漏税的安排>第五議定書》), in effect since December 6, 2019, introduces specific criteria determining entitlement to treaty benefits. According to this protocol, treaty benefits will not be granted if, upon careful consideration of all relevant facts and conditions, it is reasonably determined that

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obtaining these benefits was a primary purpose of the arrangement or transactions, thereby providing direct or indirect benefits under the Arrangement. Exceptions are made when such benefits align with the Arrangement's relevant objectives and goals.

Additionally, the application of the dividend clause of tax agreements is bound by the stipulations outlined in the PRC tax laws and regulations, including the guidelines specified in the Notice of the State Taxation Administration on the Issues Concerning the Application of the Dividend Clauses of Tax Agreements (《國家稅務總局關於執行稅收協定股息條款有關問題的 通知》) (Guo Shui Han [2009] No. 81). Compliance with these regulations is essential in determining the taxation applicable to dividends under the Arrangement.

### **Enterprise Investors**

Pursuant to the provisions outlined in the PRC Enterprise Income Tax Law (《中華人民 共和國企業所得税法》), enacted by the National People's Congress (NPC) on March 16, 2007, and enforced from January 1, 2008, subsequently amended on February 24, 2017, and December 29, 2018, and in alignment with the Implementation Provisions of the Enterprise Income Tax Law of the PRC(《中華人民共和國企業所得税法實施條例》), promulgated by the State Council on December 6, 2007, and effective from January 1, 2008, amended in 2019 (collectively referred to as the "EIT Law"), it is established that a non-resident enterprise is generally liable to a 10% enterprise income tax on income sourced within the PRC. Such income includes dividends and bonuses received from a PRC resident enterprise. This taxation applies to non-resident enterprises that lack a physical establishment or premises in the PRC. Alternatively, if an establishment or premise exists within the PRC, but the PRC-sourced income is unrelated to said establishment or premise, it is subject to the aforementioned taxation.

The withholding tax for non-resident enterprises is mandated to be deducted at the source, whereby the entity making the payment assumes the role of the withholding agent. Consequently, the withholding agent is obligated to withhold the income tax from the payment or due payment each time it is disbursed or becomes due.

The Circular of the State Taxation Administration (STA) on Issues Relating to the Withholding of Enterprise Income Tax on Dividends Paid by PRC Resident Enterprises to Overseas Non-PRC Resident Enterprise Shareholders of H Shares (《國家稅務總局關於中國居民企業向境外H股非居民企業股東派發股息代扣代繳企業所得稅有關問題的通知》) (Guo Shui Han [2008] No. 897), which was issued by the STA and implemented on November 6, 2008, further clarified that a PRC-resident enterprise must withhold corporate income tax at a rate flat of 10% on the dividends of 2008 and onwards that it distributes to overseas non-resident enterprise shareholders of H Shares. In addition, the Response to Issues on Levying Enterprise Income Tax on Dividends Derived by Non-resident Enterprise from Holding Stock such as B-shares (《關於非居民企業取得B股等股票股息徵收企業所得稅問題的批覆》) (Guo Shui Han [2009] No. 394) which was issued by the STA and implemented on July 24, 2009, further provides that any PRC-resident enterprise that is listed on overseas stock exchanges must withhold enterprise income tax at a rate of 10% on dividends of 2008 and onwards that it

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distributes to non-resident enterprises. Such tax rates may be further changed pursuant to the tax treaty or agreement that China has concluded with relevant jurisdictions, where applicable. Accordingly, dividends paid to non-PRC resident enterprise (including HKSCC Nominees) shall be subject to withholding enterprise income tax at a rate of 10%.

In accordance with the Arrangement between the Mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion (《內地和香港特別行政區關於對所得避免雙重徵稅和防止偷漏稅的安排》) signed on August 21, 2006, the PRC Government is authorized to impose taxes on dividends disbursed by a PRC company to Hong Kong residents, including both individuals and legal entities, not exceeding 10% of the total dividends payable by the PRC company. If a Hong Kong resident directly holds 25% or more of the equity interest in a PRC company, the tax shall not surpass 5% of the total dividends if the Hong Kong resident qualifies as the beneficial owner of the equity, and specific conditions are met.

Furthermore, the Fifth Protocol of the Arrangement between the Mainland of China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion (《<內地和香港特別行政區關於對所得避免雙重徵税和防止偷漏税的安排>第五議定書》), effective from December 6, 2019, introduces additional criteria for qualifying for treaty benefits. While other provisions may exist within the Arrangement, treaty benefits shall not be granted for relevant gains if, based on all relevant facts and conditions, it is reasonably determined that the main purpose of the arrangement or transactions, which result in direct or indirect benefits under the Arrangement, is to obtain such treaty benefits. This exception applies unless the grant of benefits aligns with the objectives and goals outlined in the Arrangement.

It is important to note that the application of the dividend clause of tax agreements is contingent upon compliance with PRC tax laws and regulations, including the guidelines provided in the Notice of the State Taxation Administration on the Issues Concerning the Application of the Dividend Clauses of Tax Agreements (《國家稅務總局關於執行稅收協定股息條款有關問題的通知》) (Guo Shui Han [2009] No. 81).

#### Tax Treaties

Non-resident investors residing in jurisdictions that have established treaties or arrangements for the avoidance of double taxation with the PRC may qualify for a reduction in the PRC enterprise income tax levied on dividends received from PRC companies. Currently, the PRC has entered into Avoidance of Double Taxation Treaties or Arrangements with several countries and regions, including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Macau Special Administrative Region, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

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Non-PRC resident enterprises eligible for preferential tax rates under these relevant taxation treaties or arrangements are required to submit an application to the PRC tax authorities for a refund of the enterprise income tax that exceeds the agreed tax rate. The approval of the refund application is subject to the evaluation and decision of the PRC tax authorities.

#### **Taxation on Share Transfer**

### Value-Added Tax and Local Surcharges

Under the guidelines outlined in the Notice on the Full Implementation of the Pilot Program for Transition from Business Tax to Value-Added Tax (《關於全面推開營業稅改徵增值稅試點的通知》) (Cai Shui [2016] No. 36) (referred to as "Circular 36"), effective from May 1, 2016, and subsequently amended on July 11, 2017, December 25, 2017, and March 20, 2019, individuals and entities conducting service transactions within the PRC are obligated to pay Value-Added Tax (VAT). "Sales of services within the PRC" are defined as transactions where either the service provider or the recipient is situated within the PRC.

Furthermore, Circular 36 specifies that the transfer of financial products, including the ownership transfer of marketable securities, is subject to a VAT rate of 6% on the taxable income. Taxable income, in this context, refers to the sales price balance after deducting the purchase price. This VAT obligation applies to both general and foreign VAT taxpayers. Notably, individuals are exempt from VAT obligations when engaging in the transfer of financial products.

As per the aforementioned regulations, non-resident individuals selling or disposing of H shares are exempt from VAT in the PRC. However, if the holders are non-resident enterprises, they may avoid VAT in the PRC only if the buyers of the H shares are individuals or entities located outside of the PRC. Conversely, the holders might be subject to VAT in the PRC if the buyers of the H shares are individuals or entities situated within the PRC.

#### Income Taxes

#### Individual investors

Under the IIT Law, gains arising from the transfer of equity interests in PRC resident enterprises are subject to individual income tax at a rate of 20%. However, in accordance with the Circular of the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and the STA on Declaring that Individual Income Tax Continues to be Exempted over Income of Individuals from Transfer of Shares (《財政部、國家稅務總局關於個人轉讓股票所得繼續暫免徵收個人所得稅的通知》) (Cai Shui Zi [1998] No. 61), issued jointly by the MOF and STA on March 30, 1998, gains obtained by individuals from the transfer of shares of listed companies have been temporarily exempted from individual income tax since January 1, 1997.

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However, on December 31, 2009, the MOF, the STA, and the CSRC jointly issued the Circular on Related Issues on Levying Individual Income Tax over the Income Received by Individuals from the Transfer of Listed Shares Subject to Sales Limitation (《關於個人轉讓上市公司限售股所得徵收個人所得税有關問題的通知》) (Cai Shui [2009] No. 167). This circular, effective from January 1, 2010, stipulates that individuals' income derived from the transfer of listed shares acquired through public offerings and trading on the Shanghai Stock Exchange and the Shenzhen Stock Exchange remains exempt from individual income tax. This exemption applies to shares not subject to sales restrictions, as defined in the Supplementary Notice on Issues Concerning the Individual Income Tax on Individuals' Income from the Transfer of Restricted Stocks of Listed Companies (《關於個人轉讓上市公司限售股所得徵收個人所得稅有關問題的補充通知》) (Cai Shui [2010] No. 70), jointly issued by the three aforementioned departments and effective from November 10, 2010.

As of the Latest Practicable Date, there are no provisions expressly stating that individual income tax shall be imposed on non-PRC resident individuals for the transfer of shares in PRC resident enterprises listed on overseas stock exchanges.

### Enterprise investors

In accordance with the Enterprise Income Tax (EIT) Law and the Implementation Provisions of the Enterprise Income Tax Law of the PRC, non-resident enterprises are typically subject to a 10% enterprise income tax on income sourced within the PRC. This includes gains realized from the disposal of equity interests in a PRC resident enterprise. However, this taxation applies only if the non-resident enterprise does not maintain a physical establishment or premises in the PRC, or if it does have such establishments in the PRC, but its PRC-sourced income is not genuinely connected with those establishments.

The withholding of income tax for non-resident enterprises is executed at the source, with the entity making the payment acting as the withholding agent. This withholding agent is obliged to deduct the income tax from each payment or due payment made to the non-resident enterprise. It's important to note that the tax liability may be reduced or exempted in accordance with applicable tax treaties or agreements on the avoidance of double taxation.

## Stamp Duty

In compliance with the PRC Stamp Duty Law, as issued by the Standing Committee of the NPC on June 10, 2021, and enforced from July 1, 2022 (referred to as the "Stamp Duty Law"), all entities and individuals involved in securities transactions within the PRC are obligated to pay stamp duty as per the regulations outlined in the Stamp Duty Law. Consequently, the stipulations concerning stamp duty applied to the transfer of shares of PRC-listed companies do not extend to the transfer and disposal of H Shares by non-PRC investors outside the PRC.

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#### Estate duty

Under prevailing PRC legislation, there is presently no imposition of estate duty within the jurisdiction.

### Major Taxes on the Company in the PRC

Please refer to the section headed "Regulatory Overview" of this document.

### TAXATION IN HONG KONG

#### Tax on Dividends

Under the current practice of the Inland Revenue Department of Hong Kong, no tax is payable in Hong Kong in respect of dividends paid by us.

# **Capital Gains Tax and Profit Tax**

No tax is imposed in Hong Kong in respect of capital gains from the sale of H Shares. However, trading gains from the sale of the H Shares by persons carrying on a trade, profession or business in Hong Kong, where such gains are derived from or arise in Hong Kong from such trade, profession or business will be subject to Hong Kong profits tax, which is currently imposed at the maximum rate of 16.5% on corporations and at the maximum rate of 15% on unincorporated businesses. The gains of certain categories of taxpayers (for example, financial institutions, insurance companies and securities dealers) are likely to be regarded as deriving trading gains rather than capital gains unless these taxpayers can prove that the investment securities are held for long-term investment purposes. Trading gains from sales of H Shares effected on the Stock Exchange will be considered to be derived from or arise in Hong Kong. Liability for Hong Kong profits tax would thus arise in respect of trading gains from sales of H Shares effected on the Stock Exchange realized by persons carrying on a business of trading or dealing in securities in Hong Kong.

# Stamp Duty

Hong Kong stamp duty, currently charged at the ad valorem rate of 0.1% on the higher of the consideration for or the market value of the H Shares, will be payable by the purchaser on every purchase and by the seller on every sale of Hong Kong securities, including H Shares (in other words, a total of 0.2% is currently payable on a typical sale and purchase transaction involving H Shares). In addition, a fixed duty of HK\$5.00 is currently payable on any instrument of transfer of H Shares. Where one of the parties is a resident outside Hong Kong and does not pay the ad valorem duty due by it, the duty not paid will be assessed on the instrument of transfer (if any) and will be payable by the transferee. If no stamp duty is paid on or before the due date, a penalty of up to ten times the duty payable may be imposed.

### **Estate Duty**

Estate Duty The Revenue (Abolition of Estate Duty) Ordinance 2005 came into effect on February 11, 2006 in Hong Kong, pursuant to which no Hong Kong estate duty is payable and no estate duty clearance papers are needed for an application of a grant of representation in respect of holders of H Shares whose deaths occur on or after February 11, 2006.

## FOREIGN EXCHANGE

The lawful currency of the PRC is Renminbi, which is currently subject to foreign exchange control and cannot be freely converted into foreign currency. The SAFE, with the authorization of the PBOC, is empowered with the functions of administering all matters relating to foreign exchange, including the enforcement of foreign exchange control regulations.

The Regulations of the PRC on the Management of Foreign Exchange (《中華人民共和國外匯管理條例》, the "Regulations on the Management of Foreign Exchange"), which was promulgated by the State Council on January 29, 1996 and effective on April 1, 1996, classifies all international payments and transfers into current items and capital items. Most of the current items are not subject to the approval of foreign exchange administrative authorities, while capital items are subject to the approval of foreign exchange administrative authorities. According to the Regulations on the Management of Foreign Exchange as amended on January 14, 1997 and August 5, 2008, the PRC will not impose any restriction on international current payments and transfers.

The Regulations for the Administration of Settlement, Sale and Payment of Foreign Exchange (《結匯、售匯及付匯管理規定》, the "Settlement Regulations"), which was promulgated by the PBOC on June 20, 1996 and effective on July 1, 1996, removes other restrictions on convertibility of foreign exchange under current items, while imposing existing restrictions on foreign exchange transactions under capital items.

According to the Announcement on Improving the Reform of the Renminbi Exchange Rate Formation Mechanism (《關於完善人民幣匯率形成機制改革的公告》) (PBOC Announcement [2005] No. 16), which was issued by the PBOC on July 21, 2005 and effective on the same date, the PRC began to implement a managed floating exchange rate system in which the exchange rate would be determined based on market supply and demand and adjusted with reference to a basket of currencies from July 21, 2005. Therefore, the Renminbi exchange rate was no longer pegged to the U.S. dollar. The PBOC would publish the closing price of the exchange rate of the Renminbi against trading currencies such as the U.S. dollar in the interbank foreign exchange market after the closing of the market on each working day, as the central parity of the currency against Renminbi transactions on the following working day.

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On August 5, 2008, the State Council promulgated the revised Regulation on the Management of Foreign Exchange, which has made substantial changes to the foreign exchange supervision system of the PRC. First, it has adopted an approach of balancing the inflow and outflow of foreign exchange. Foreign exchange income received overseas can be repatriated or deposited overseas, and foreign exchange and settlement funds under the capital account are required to be used only for purposes as approved by the competent authorities and foreign exchange administrative authorities; second, it has improved the RMB exchange rate formation mechanism based on market supply and demand; third, in the event that international balance of payment suffer or may suffer a material misbalance, or the national economy encounters or may encounter a severe crisis, the State may adopt necessary safeguard or control measures against international balance of payment; fourth, it has enhanced the supervision and administration of foreign exchange transactions and grant extensive authorities to the SAFE to enhance its supervisory and administrative powers.

According to the relevant laws and regulations in the PRC, PRC enterprises (including foreign investment enterprises) which need foreign exchange for current item transactions may, without the approval of the foreign exchange administrative authorities, effect payment from foreign exchange accounts opened at the designated foreign exchange banks, on the strength of valid transaction receipt or proof. Foreign investment enterprises which need foreign exchange for the distribution of profits to their shareholders and PRC enterprises which, in accordance with regulations, are required to pay dividends to their shareholders in foreign exchange (such as our Company) may, on the strength of resolutions of the board of directors or the shareholders' meeting on the distribution of profits, effect payment from foreign exchange accounts at the designated foreign exchange banks or effect exchange and payment at the designated foreign exchange banks.

On October 23, 2014, the State Council promulgated the Decisions on Matters including Canceling and Adjusting a Batch of Administrative Approval Items (《國務院關於取消和調整一批行政審批項目等事項的決定》) (Guo Fa [2014] No. 50), which decided to cancel the approval requirement of the SAFE and its branches for the remittance and settlement of the proceeds raised from the overseas listing of the foreign shares into RMB domestic accounts.

On December 26, 2014, the SAFE promulgated and implemented the Notice of the SAFE on Issues Concerning the Foreign Exchange Administration of Overseas Listing (《國家外匯管理局關於境外上市外匯管理有關問題的通知》) (Hui Fa [2014] No. 54), pursuant to which, a domestic company shall, within 15 business days from the date of the end of its overseas listing issuance, register the overseas listing with the Administration of Foreign Exchange at the place of its establishment; the proceeds from an overseas listing of a domestic company may be remitted to the PRC or deposited overseas, but the use of the proceeds shall be consistent with the contents as specified in the document and other disclosure documents.

According to the Notice of the SAFE on Further Simplifying and Improving Policies for the Foreign Exchange Administration of Direct Investment (《國家外匯管理局關於進一步簡 化和改進直接投資外匯管理政策的通知》) (Hui Fa [2015] No. 13) promulgated by the SAFE on February 13, 2015 and took effect on June 1, 2015, two of the administrative examination

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and approval items, being the confirmation of foreign exchange registration under domestic direct investment and the confirmation of foreign exchange registration under overseas direct investment have been canceled, the foreign exchange registration under domestic direct investment and overseas direct investment shall be directly examined and handled by banks. The SAFE and its branch offices shall indirectly regulate the foreign exchange registration of direct investment through banks.

According to the Notice of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Reforming and Regulating Policies on the Administration of Foreign Exchange Settlement under Capital Accounts (《國家外匯管理局關於改革和規範資本項目結匯管理政策的通知》) (Hui Fa [2016] No. 16) issued by the SAFE and came into effect on June 9, 2016, the settlement of foreign exchange receipts under the capital account (including the foreign exchange capital, external debts and funds recovered from overseas listing, etc.) that are subject to discretionary settlement as already specified by relevant policies may be handled at banks based on the domestic institutions' actual requirements for business operation. The proportion of discretionary settlement of domestic institutions' foreign exchange receipts under the capital account is temporarily determined as 100%. The SAFE may, based on the international balance of payments, adjust the aforesaid proportion at appropriate time.

On January 26, 2017, the SAFE issued the Notice of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Further Promoting the Reform of Foreign Exchange Administration and Improving the Examination of Authenticity and Compliance (《國家外匯管理局關於進一步推進外匯管理改革完善真實合規性審核的通知》) (Hui Fa [2017] No. 3) to further expand the scope of settlement for domestic foreign exchange loans, allow settlement for domestic foreign exchange loans with export background under goods trading; allow repatriation of funds under domestic guaranteed foreign loans for domestic utilization; allow settlement for domestic foreign exchange accounts of foreign institutions operating in the Free Trade Pilot Zones; and adopt the model of full-coverage RMB and foreign currency overseas lending management, where a domestic institution engages in overseas lending, the sum of its outstanding overseas lending in RMB and outstanding overseas lending in foreign currencies shall not exceed 30% of its owner's equity in the audited financial statements of the preceding year.

On October 23, 2019, the SAFE issued the Circular of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Further Promoting Cross-border Trade and Investment Facilitation (《國家外匯管理局關於進一步促進跨境貿易投資便利化的通知》) (Hui Fa [2019] No. 28), which stipulated that on the basis that investing foreign-funded enterprises may make domestic equity investments with their capital funds in accordance with laws and regulations, non-investing foreign-funded enterprises are permitted to legally make domestic equity investments with their capital funds under the premise that the existing Special Administrative Measures (Negative List) for the Access of Foreign Investment (《外商投資准入特別管理措施(負面清單)》) are not violated and domestic invested projects are true and compliant.

## TAXATION AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE

## **CIRCULAR 37**

The SAFE promulgated and implemented the Notice on Issues Concerning the Foreign Exchange Administration of Overseas Investment, Financing and Round-trip Investments Conducted by Domestic Residents through Special Purpose Vehicles (《關於境內居民通過特 殊目的公司境外投融資及返程投資外匯管理有關問題的通知》) ("Circular 37") on July 4, 2014. According to Circular 37, domestic residents, individuals and institutions, are required to complete the foreign exchange registration of overseas investment with the SAFE before they invest in special purpose vehicles with legitimate assets or equity interests inside and outside the PRC. In addition, such offshore special purpose vehicle must update their foreign exchange registration of overseas investment with the SAFE timely, after they underwent any change of basic information (including change of individual shareholders, name and operation term of domestic residents), or any change of material events relating to increasing or decreasing in investment, transferring or exchanging shares, or merger or division. Failure to comply with the registration procedures as set out in Circular 37 may result in restrictions imposed on the subsequent foreign exchange activities of the relevant domestic residents, including the remitting back of profits and dividends. Domestic residents who invested in special purpose vehicles with legitimate assets or equity interests inside and outside the PRC prior to the implementation of Circular 37, but failed to complete the foreign exchange registration of overseas investments shall submit explanatory statement and state the reasons to the SAFE. The SAFE may allow complementary registration under the principles of legality and legitimacy. In the event of any violation of foreign exchange regulations by domestic residents who apply for the fore-said complementary registration, administrative penalty would be imposed in accordance with relevant laws.

According to the Notice on Further Simplifying and Improving Policies for the Foreign Exchange Administration of Direct Investment (《關於進一步簡化和改進直接投資外匯管理政策的通知》) promulgated by the SAFE on February 13, 2015 and took effect on June 1, 2015, banks that have obtained the financial institution identification codes issued by the foreign exchange regulatory authorities and have opened the Capital Account Information System at the local foreign exchange regulatory authorities may directly handle the foreign exchange registration of direct investment for domestic foreign-invested enterprises and overseas enterprises' domestic investors through the Capital Account Information System at the foreign exchange regulatory authorities, and the foreign exchange regulatory authorities shall perform indirect regulation over the foreign exchange registration of direct investment via banks.