

For Immediate Release

Inaugural Deployment of HKRITA's Award-winning Textile Recycling Technologies Helps Close the Loop for the Fashion Industry

Opening of Hong Kong's First Local Spinning Mill in Half a Century and
First Retail Shop Selling G2G Recycled Garments in Hong Kong

3 September 2018, Hong Kong —The Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (HKRITA)'s first local deployments of award-winning textile recycling technologies have been put into practice at both industrial and retail levels, with the openings today of new facilities at the Novetex Factory in Tai Po Industrial Estate and a retail shop selling 'Garment-to-Garment' (G2G) recycled garments in The Mills, Tsuen Wan. Locally developed textile recycling processes, including **Post-consumer Blended Textile Separation and Recycling by Hydrothermal Treatment**, **Upcycling Post-consumer Blended Products** and a **Garment-to-Garment Recycle System**, provide ground-breaking solutions to reuse textiles made of mixed fibres. The two facilities launched today, enabled by these technologies, provide a significant platform for Hong Kong's sustainable development of the textile and apparel industries, demonstrating the efforts of HKRITA and collaborators, Novetex Textiles Limited, H&M Foundation and The Mills, in achieving major breakthroughs to create a closed loop for post-consumer textiles through recycling.

Mrs Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, Chief Executive and **Mr Nicholas W Yang, Secretary for Innovation and Technology**, joined today's opening ceremony at the Novetex Factory. Mr Yang also took part in the opening ceremony of the retail shop selling G2G recycled garments in The Mills in the morning session.

Mr Edwin Keh, Chief Executive Officer of HKRITA, said, "After successfully developing revolutionary recycling technologies, we have devoted sustained effort to put them into practice. 'Made in Hong Kong' from our recycling systems in the yarn mill and the mini-scale system in the retail shop represent the industry's well-applied innovation efforts. These not only revitalise a decades-old major industry, but also do it most sustainably for the benefit of our community and as a responsible global citizen. Indeed, the end-to-end sustainability measures during the processes discourage unnecessary disposal of clothes by demonstrating that textile recycling is possible even in compact and busy cities like Hong Kong."

Hong Kong's First Local Spinning Mill in Half a Century

First Recycling Mill Demonstrates the Application of Recycling Technologies at the Industrial Level

As Hong Kong's first-ever textile recycling mill and the first local spinning mill to have opened in half a century, the Novetex Factory is also a pioneer in applying award-winning technology developed by HKRITA to a production-level textile upcycling system. The mechanical recycling system provides a safe and dry process to upcycle textile wastes into quality textile fibre which can then be used in the production of yarn, fabric and garments. This facility will eventually have 3 production lines, each capable of producing one ton a day of recycled fibres from post-consumer textiles.

The Novetex Factory will be in full operation in October, providing a sustainable and effective means of fibre-to-fibre recycling to drive the sustainability of the textile industry. **Ms Ronna Chao, Chairman, Novetex Textiles Limited**, said, "Novetex Textiles Limited's upcycling technology breathes new life into otherwise old and unwanted garments, upcycling them into fabrics for use in footwear, apparel, and other soft applications. As a leading global textile manufacturer, Novetex is committed to sharing the responsibility of environmental protection and to supporting Hong Kong's innovative technologies. This is a big step for us and for Hong Kong, as we help turn a new and exciting page in the quest for 'Reindustrialisation and Innovation'."

HKRITA and H&M Foundation Jointly Close the Loop for the Textile and Clothing Industry

The factory also provides a testing place for the **pre-industrial scale hydrothermal system** which enables material separation of cotton polyester blends. The separated polyester fibres are ideal for spinning and manufacturing of new fabric, while cellulose powders, decomposed from the cotton, can be applied to functional products or regenerated fibre. This project is one of the joint collaborations between HKRITA and H&M Foundation.

HKRITA and the H&M Foundation kicked off a four-year partnership in September 2016 to develop recycling technologies. The aim is to close the loop for the textile and clothing industry. In the ambition of maximising impact in the industry and the potential for protecting the planet, this technology will when finalised be made available for anyone to use. The H&M Foundation has, to date, donated EUR 3.5 million in funding, out of a total amount of EUR 5.8 million committed under the partnership.

Since 2016, promising solutions including chemical and hydrothermal treatments have been identified to recycle blended textiles into new fabrics and yarns. HKRITA is going to focus the research direction on enhancing the efficiency of fibre-to-fibre closed loop recycling technologies, improving the properties of the separated fibres and cellulose powders, giving added value to textile fibre and extending the application of separated powders in order to develop more sustainable solutions for the industry.

Mr Erik Bang, Innovation Lead of the H&M Foundation, said, “This is a significant step towards a new fashion industry that operates within the planetary boundaries. More importantly, we want to make an impact on our industry to protect our planet and our living conditions. As we scale up and make this technology freely available to the industry, we will reduce our dependence on limited natural resources to clothe a growing global population.”

First Retail Shop Selling Garment-to-Garment (G2G) Recycled Garments in Hong Kong – New and Accessible Experience of Garment Recycling

The G2G Recycle System, set up in a retail shop in The Mills, is a joint collaboration among HKRITA, the H&M Foundation and Novetex Textiles Limited with the support of The Mills. The system is a mini-scale garment-to-garment production line to recycle post-consumer garments into clean and useful products. It tackles technical challenges of how each process in the entire production line should be configured for operational compatibility within a small space. Members of the public are encouraged to bring items of their unwanted clothing to the shop, select their preferred style, and then bring a new garment home. The G2G shop opens new ways for the traditional textile and fashion industry to interface with consumers, and presents possibilities for fresh business models and a new digital fashion business.

In addition to housing the pioneering G2G Recycle System, the Mills is also a revitalisation project by Nan Fung Group transforming the textile factory into a destination for innovation, culture and learning. **Ms Vanessa Cheung, Founder of The Mills**, said, “The Mills is a story of re-invention – about remembering our heritage in the past and re-imagining it for the future. We are extremely excited about the launch of the G2G retail space at The Mills. This techstyle system is a re-invention of how we think about recycling as well as sustainability that vividly represents the core value of the Mills. We hope that with the launch of this new retail space, consumers can better understand the changes in the global techstyle space and be inspired to be more sustainable in their lifestyles.”

About The Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (HKRITA)

Established in 2006, HKRITA is funded by the Innovation and Technology Commission, HKSAR Government and hosted by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. HKRITA engages in applied research to support the textile and apparel industry in order to boost their overall competitiveness, and to drive sustainable improvements and bring benefits for society. By providing one-stop services for applied research, technology transfer and commercialisation, HKRITA makes sustained efforts to promote successful projects for industry application.

About H&M Foundation

H&M Foundation is a non-profit global foundation, privately funded by the Stefan Persson family, founders and main owners of H&M group. Its mission is to drive long lasting positive change and improve living conditions by investing in people, communities and innovative ideas. Through partnerships with organisations around the globe, the H&M Foundation aims to accelerate the progress needed to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The H&M Foundation focuses on four areas: Education, Water, Equality and Planet. In addition to this, it can also provide emergency relief. Since 2013, the Stefan Persson family has donated 1.5 billion Swedish krona (\$200 million/€163 million) to the H&M Foundation. Visit hmfoundation.com and follow @hmfoundation on Facebook and Instagram.

About Novetex

Novetex was established in 1976 and has more than 1,000 employees. It has expanded its operations over the last four decades to become one of the world's largest single site yarn spinners. Novetex's vision is committed to sustainability, environmental policy and clean production. The company recognizes its role in achieving environmental best practices and continuous improvement in its business activities. Novetex ensures that all employees are aware of environmental issues, creates a sense of responsibility for its resources and community, and informs and involves its business partners and suppliers to develop an environmentally responsible culture.

About The Mills

The Mills is a landmark revitalisation project by Nan Fung Group, a celebration of shared industrial legacy with Hong Kong, and a step towards a future of applied creativity and innovation. Announced in 2014 by Nan Fung Group on its 60th anniversary, The Mills project will transform and revitalise the company's former textile factory into a destination for innovation, culture and learning. The Mills is comprised of 3 pillars, each contributing a unique perspective and experience: Fabrica – a business incubator, fund and space/lab for techstyle startups and strategic partners; Shop floor – a landmark for experiential retail, an expression of Hong Kong's evolving character; and Centre of Heritage, Arts and Textile (CHAT) – a non-profit arts and cultural institution exploring textile arts and techstyle innovation. The Mills is targeted to open in December 2018.

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Photo Captions

Photo 1



(From left) Mr Edwin Keh, Chief Executive Officer of HKRITA, Mr Erik Bang, Innovation Lead of H&M Foundation, Dr Harry Lee, Chairman of HKRITA, Mr Nicholas Yang, Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Milton Chan, Chief Executive Officer/Director of Novetex Textiles Limited, and Mr Alexander Chan, Co-Director of The Mills Fabrica, officiate the grand opening of G2G Recycle System in The Mills.

Photo 2



Mr Nicholas Yang, Secretary for Innovation and Technology (3rd Right), in company with other guests, are toasting in the ceremony.

Photo 3



Mr. Nicholas Yang, Secretary for Innovation and Technology and other guests learn about the operation of G2G Recycle System in the retail shop.

Photo 4



The G2G Recycle System, set up in the retail shop in The Mills, is a production line equipped with pioneering recycling technology to recycle used clothes to become sanitized garments.

Photo 5



Mrs Carrie Lam, Chief Executive (2nd Left) and Ms Ronna Chao, Chairman of Novetex Textiles Limited (2nd Right) together with Mr Nicholas Yang, Secretary for Innovation and Technology (1st Left) and Dr Harry Lee, Chairman of HKRITA (1st Right) hosted the opening ceremony of the Novetex Upcycling Factory today.

Photo 6



Mrs Carrie Lam, Chief Executive, Ms Ronna Chau, Chairman of Novetex Textiles Limited and various honorable guests joined the opening ceremony of the Novetex Upcycling Factory.

Photo 7



Mrs Carrie Lam, Chief Executive visited the Hong Kong's first recycling mill with other guests.

Photo 8



This Novetex Upcycling Factory will eventually have 3 production lines, each capable of producing one ton of recycled fibres a day from post-consumer textiles.