

Eminent speakers offer insights at 59th AALCO Annual Session

The 59th Annual Session of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO), which came to a close today (December 1), brought together high-ranking diplomats and legal experts representing the member states as well as observer delegations representing governments and international organisations from across the globe to discuss important international law topics.

The Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, was elected the President of the 59th Annual Session of AALCO at the Inaugural Session and chaired the three-day meeting. She expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the Central People's Government and AALCO for the full support in hosting the Annual Session in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) for the first time.

"Securing international organisations to hold decision-making conferences in Hong Kong strengthens our position as a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region. To this end, the Department of Justice will continue to actively foster international legal co-operation and exchange," Ms Cheng said.

The immediate past Secretary-General of AALCO, Professor Kennedy Gastorn, said, "The decision by China and AALCO to establish the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre is of great significance. It will help expand the influence of AALCO, enhance regional co-operation, build Hong Kong into a centre for international legal and dispute resolution in the Asia-Pacific region, and promote the HKSAR's development.

"Adding to the five existing regional arbitration centres of AALCO, the regional arbitration centre in Hong Kong will seek to integrate itself in the AALCO dispute settlement system and perform a variety of tasks, including providing facilities for alternative dispute resolution services and assisting in the enforcement of arbitration awards, and to also promote the growth and effective functioning of arbitration and other dispute resolution services, including online dispute resolution (ODR) services.

"I am confident that this newly established AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre will further advance the growth of ODR in the region and beyond."

The 59th Annual Session was conducted in a hybrid mode, with both online and physical participants, for the very first time in the history of AALCO. Successfully hosting internationally influential events is important for Hong Kong as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre in the Asia-Pacific region. It fully reflects the staunch national support of "one country, two systems" for Hong Kong to preserve the existing legal system, and to support, strengthen and enhance Hong Kong's international

competitiveness.