

Opening remarks by SJ at forum titled Hong Kong – The Common Law Gateway for UAE Businesses to China and Beyond in Dubai, UAE (English only)

Following are the opening remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the forum titled Hong Kong – The Common Law Gateway for UAE Businesses to China and Beyond in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), today (May 22, Dubai time):

His Excellency Abdullah (Minister of Justice of the UAE, Mr Abdullah bin Sultan bin Awad Al Nuaimi), His Excellency Mohammad (President and CEO of the Dubai Chambers, Mr Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah), His Excellency Ambassador Zhang (Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the UAE, Mr Zhang Yiming), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I would like to begin by welcoming all of you to this forum co-organised by the Department of Justice, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Dubai. And of course, I wish to express my gratitude to the Dubai Chambers as a co-organiser, and all the supporting organisations including entities coming from Hong Kong and UAE.

In the next few minutes, I wish to tell you very briefly who we are, why we are here, and what you are going to hear from us this morning. Now, we are the Hong Kong delegation led by me, consisting of more than 30 persons coming from both the Government and the private sector. In so far as the Government is concerned, apart from colleagues coming from the Department of Justice, we have the Director-General of Invest Hong Kong, which is responsible for promoting overseas investment in Hong Kong. And we have colleagues coming from the Economic and Trade Office in Dubai. We also have the leader of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, which is a statutory body of Hong Kong responsible for promoting trade and development.

Now turning to the private sector. I am very honoured to be joined by the leaders of the two legal professional bodies from Hong Kong, namely the Hong Kong Bar Association and the Law Society of Hong Kong. And we also have very top lawyers specialised in different areas ranging from commercial, merger and acquisition, setting up of companies, IPO (initial public offering), up to, for example, dispute resolution. In addition, we also have the person-in-charge of the leading arbitration institution from Hong Kong and the person-in-charge of the listing division of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. So we do have a diversity of top professionals coming from my jurisdiction.

We are here today to accomplish a very important mission. The mission is

to promote and to establish a better and closer relationship between UAE and Hong Kong, in particular in the area of legal co-operation. This very important mission has to be considered in the context of Hong Kong being a special administrative region of China.

The UAE and China have a very strong history of friendship, dating back to the days of the ancient Silk Road. The modern Silk Road is under construction between the two countries. And in this very important construction work, Hong Kong plays a very significant role. Under the principle of "one country, two systems", Hong Kong enjoys many unique advantages and characteristics, one of which is our common law system. Hong Kong is the only common law jurisdiction in China. And that is why under various important national development plans of China, Hong Kong has been assigned to be the international legal and dispute resolution services centre. Hong Kong has very often been described as a "super connector" and a "super value-adder" between China and countries outside China. The natural question is how exactly can Hong Kong perform the role as a "super connector"? How to connect the rest of the world with China? And at the same time, how can we add value to co-operation between China and other countries?

And that takes me to the last point – what you are going to hear from us today. The theme of today is Hong Kong – The Common Law Gateway for UAE Businesses to China and Beyond. It is a gateway which serves as a platform that can take you from your country to China. And I suppose we can visualise the gateway as a highway in real life, but it's a very special and very unique highway in the sense that we can ensure that you will have fast, convenient and safe access to China. And more importantly, on the way, we will have a lot of service stations to ensure that you will have a pleasant journey. What I really mean is that, our legal system and our legal services can provide or act as a one-stop shop. We are ready, willing and able to provide top-quality, user-friendly and reliable legal services to enable you to explore business and investment opportunities, not just in Hong Kong, but in China as a whole. Starting from the point you consider to set up a business venture in Hong Kong, using it as a platform for investing in China for example, to the point of time where you wish to expand your business by IPOs, and to the moment when, unfortunately, some disputes arise and you have to resolve your dispute, and to the point you decided to reap the profit or fruits of your investment by leaving or terminating the relationship. So these are the sort of one-stop shop services that Hong Kong's common law system can offer, which cannot be found elsewhere.

Now, I hope I have said enough to whet your appetite. Many eminent speakers from the delegation will provide you with the essential details and information in due course.

The important thing about this forum, it is not just about the provision of information or exchange of views. In my view, what is crucial about this trip is that it has another more important meaning. In order to build and establish and maintain a long-term friendship and relationship, I truly believe that what is crucial is mutual understanding, mutual respect, and mutual trust and confidence. And I believe sincerity is the key to all these matters. I am not sure whether you have noticed, I have deliberately chosen

to wear a tie with the colour green, white and black this morning, because I know that these three colours are of great importance to your culture and to your country, representing core values such as growth, purity, peace, power and strength. And these happen to be very important values to the Chinese people as well.

You may wonder, what about the red colour, which also appears on your national flag? Because your national flag is of four colours – red, white, green and black. I have black, green and white on me. And apart from being the fourth colour of the national flag, the red colour is of great importance to Chinese people. But I don't feel I need to wear any red. It is because the red colour is represented and reflected by the very strong passion and the sincere wish and the heart of each and every member of my delegation to make friends in UAE and with all of you today.

So on this note, I wish to repeat my gratitude to all my friends in UAE who make this event successful. And I wish you a very fruitful and enjoyable forum, and I hope to see you at lunch. Thank you very much.