

Speech by CE at AALCO Annual Arbitration Forum 2023 (English only) (with video)

Following is the video speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the AALCO Annual Arbitration Forum 2023 today (December 5):

Dr Kamalinne Pinitpuvadol (Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO)), Deputy Commissioner Fang Jianming (Deputy Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)), Mr Nick Chan (Director of AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre), Consuls-General, distinguished guests from around the world, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to speak to you at this annual forum of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization. I am glad, especially, to welcome you here in Hong Kong, as today is the first time for this high-powered forum to be staged in our city.

The theme of today's forum is "Resolving Differences in a Changing World by Staying True to the Bandung Spirit". The Bandung Spirit, containing the Ten Principles of Bandung and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, is a widely recognised set of norms for international relations, and is as relevant and significant to modern society as it was back when it was formulated.

Hong Kong is proud to have a long and established tradition of the rule of law. Our judiciary exercises its powers independently, free from any interference. We are the only common law jurisdiction in China and ranked one of the world's top seats for arbitration.

Our Basic Law authorises us to participate in international organisations. At last count, Hong Kong, China is a member of over 230 international organisations and conferences not limited to states.

Over 260 multilateral agreements, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, continue to be in force and applicable to the HKSAR.

In short, ladies and gentlemen, we have a legal system that is similar to most major financial centres around the world, and our standard on rights and freedoms is the international standard. We, therefore, certainly uphold the Bandung Spirit of mutual respect, peace and equality.

It is against this backdrop, and with the strong support from our

Central People's Government, that the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization officially opened its Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre in May 2022.

It is an acknowledgement of the HKSAR's position as a leading centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region, in line with our positioning under the National 14th Five-Year Plan.

AALCO represents almost all major states from Asia and Africa. A substantial number of AALCO member states are also active members of the Belt and Road Initiative, a visionary co-operation platform proposed by President Xi Jinping a decade ago.

Hong Kong champions free trade, and we are committed to promoting regional and international co-operation. We endeavour to serve as a "super connector" and "super value-adder" between the Mainland of China and the rest of the world, through the twin conduits of AALCO and Belt and Road networks.

As I announced in my second Policy Address, we will continue to step up our efforts in excelling as an international legal centre. This Forum, I am pleased to add, offers a perfect opportunity for you to connect, and to forge partnerships that will drive our common future. It will, also, go a long way to supporting to the rapid development of our legal prowess.

I wish you all a successful forum, and the best of health in the coming year. Thank you.