

Speech by CE at opening ceremony of 11th Asia and Pacific Regional Conference of the International Association of Prosecutors (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the opening ceremony of the 11th Asia and Pacific Regional Conference of the International Association of Prosecutors today (November 28):

Honourable Vice President Tong Jianming (First Deputy Prosecutor General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Class One Grand Prosecutor and Vice-President of the International Association of Prosecutors), Deputy Head Chen Feng (Deputy Head of the Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)), Deputy Commissioner Fang Jianming (Deputy Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC in the HKSAR), Mr Roel Dona (Secretary-General of the International Association of Prosecutors), Attorneys General, Prosecutors General, Consuls-General, prosecutors and officials from around the world, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to you all. And welcome to Hong Kong. I am pleased to be here, this morning, for the opening ceremony of the International Association of Prosecutors' 11th Asia and Pacific Regional Conference.

It has been 20 years since Hong Kong last hosted a regional conference of the International Association of Prosecutors, and it is an honour to do so again this year. Hong Kong, I want you to know, has come a long, good way over these past two decades.

For the next few minutes, I'm happy to update you on Hong Kong, and how our distinguished legal sector is working to protect the people of Hong Kong in this age of technology – and technology crime.

Under the "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong enjoys a unique status, unparalleled by other jurisdictions in many ways. We are a special administrative region within the People's Republic of China, our country. At the same time, Hong Kong flourishes as a major international financial and legal hub, with deep and long-standing connections to the rest of the world.

We are a city characterised by unrivalled connectivity and a free flow of information, capital, goods and people.

Under the Basic Law, our constitutional document, Hong Kong may make appropriate arrangements with foreign states, for reciprocal juridical assistance. We may, using the title "Hong Kong, China", participate in international organisations and international trade agreements; and develop relations with foreign states and regions in such fields as trade, financial, shipping, communications and sports. Representatives of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government may, also, participate in international organisations and conferences, as members of Chinese delegations.

Hong Kong is China's only common law jurisdiction. Our legal system, resembling that of many major global financial centres, is supported by a long and established practice of the rule of law. Our courts exercise their judicial power independently, free from any interference.

Also free from any interference, as prescribed by the Basic Law, is the conduct of criminal prosecutions by our Department of Justice. Our prosecutors pursue justice with integrity, professionalism and passion. And we are deeply committed to international co-operation in the fight against crime.

This three-day Regional Conference of the International Association of Prosecutors, is hosted by the Prosecutions Division of the Hong Kong SAR Government's Department of Justice. With nearly 100 high-profile prosecutors and senior legal professionals here from 25 countries and regions, this Conference is testament to Hong Kong's determination to work with the world – with you – in combatting crime.

The Conference theme, "Effective Prosecution Service in the Technological Age", highlights the critical importance of maintaining an innovative, connected and efficient public prosecution service in today's digital, ever-changing world.

That demands that our public prosecution departments and offices, and everyone in them, be kept abreast of the latest developments in the law, as well as society.

Cross-jurisdictional sharing of best practices and experience gained can make a decided difference in tackling technology crime, on an international level.

In Hong Kong, a highly-developed international financial centre where technology is easily accessible by all, criminals are increasingly turning to the use of cryptocurrencies, virtual assets and technology in committing traditional crime. And crimes executed solely through technology are also on the rise.

That's why Hong Kong places great emphasis on the security of cyber infrastructure, in fighting technology crime, locally and internationally.

The Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong's Cybercrime Sub-committee has published a consultation paper, on "Cyber-Dependent Crimes and Jurisdictional

Issues". The Sub-committee's law reform proposals centre on cyber-dependent crimes, ranging from the illegal interference and interception of computer data and systems, to possessing devices for committing a crime.

The recommendations, which are in varying stages of progress, are part of an ongoing, multi-stage focus on cybercrime and related matters. They were created to better protect individual rights, in the face of rapid developments in information technology and the Internet, and the potential for our citizens to be criminally exploited.

Last year, the Prosecutions Division of our Department of Justice established a Technology Crime Sub-Division. Its dedicated team of prosecutors specialise in handling and prosecuting technology crimes.

The prosecutors work closely with cyber and forensic experts, and the Police's Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau, to combat technology crime in the city.

Hong Kong has been equally active in international outreach. Last September, we hosted the International Symposium on Cyber Policing, bringing together police leaders and officers from the Mainland, Macao, Interpol and 35 international jurisdictions, together with scholars and experts, all focused on cybersecurity.

And, just last month, we participated in the 14th China-ASEAN Prosecutors-General Conference in Singapore, as part of China's delegation to the conference. We took part in discussions, alongside Mainland colleagues, on issues related to today's technology, as well as financial crime and its effective prosecution.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to our prosecutors, from home and beyond. In the pursuit of justice, you uphold the principles of fairness, impartiality and, most importantly, the rule of law. You stay committed to safeguarding the public interest in spite of formidable challenges.

I take pride in Hong Kong's excellent prosecutors. Hong Kong will continue to pursue the highest prosecutorial standards, bringing to the world stage a dedicated prosecution service, working with other jurisdictions to take on the heightened challenges of our technological age.

My thanks to the International Association of Prosecutors, for hosting this year's Asia and Pacific Regional Conference here in Hong Kong. I am grateful, too, to the Department of Justice for its dedicated efforts in organising this essential international gathering.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you a conference replete with intelligence, insight and inspiration. And the best of prosecutions, in the year to come.

I invite you, too, to find time for all that Hong Kong has and can offer. Day and night. From the many pleasures of food and beverage, to the

arts and entertainment in our East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange. Autumn is a glorious season to hike the hills, seaside trails and country parks of Hong Kong, which make up some 40 per cent of our territory. That's Hong Kong, where the business of pleasure is everywhere you look. Work hard but enjoy Hong Kong.

Thank you.