

Speech by SCST at AALCO Hong Kong Sports Mediation Training Programme (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, at the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) Hong Kong Sports Mediation Training Programme today (January 18):

Nick, Director of AALCO-HKRAC (Director of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre, Mr Nick Chan), Deputy Secretary for Justice, Horace (Deputy Secretary for Justice, Dr Cheung Kwok-kwan), Kenneth (Mr Kenneth Fok), our Legislative Council member and also Vice President of the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to join you at today's AALCO Hong Kong Sports Mediation Training Programme. First of all, I would like to thank AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre for organising this training programme, which offers members of the sports and legal communities in Hong Kong the essential knowledge in sports mediation.

Before going into how sports mediation can help provide an alternate dispute settlement option and how it can further spur the development of the sports sector, it is important to understand our policy for driving sports development in Hong Kong. This is the context against which sports mediation in Hong Kong would work, and is therefore an important starting point in understanding the topic of sports mediation. After sharing with you our policy in sports development, I will then go on to share how the sports sector has been, and will continue to be, involved in promoting sports mediation.

Hong Kong's policy for driving sports development is guided by five strategic directions. Firstly, promoting sports in the community; secondly, supporting elite sports; thirdly, enhancing professionalism; fourthly, maintaining Hong Kong as a centre for international sports events; and fifthly, developing sports as an industry. These strategic directions are important on their own, but they are also intertwined in building the sports ecosystem in Hong Kong.

Our commitment to sports development is evident in the increasing resources that the Hong Kong Government has devoted to this policy area over the years. In 2024/25, we are spending about HK\$7.9 billion, which is double of the annual spending of HK\$3.9 billion 10 years ago.

Our efforts have borne fruit, as amply witnessed by the great

achievements of our elite athletes, and the value-added of the sports sector to our economy has increased to HK\$38 billion in 2022, an 11.8 per cent increase over the past five years.

Now, I will zoom in to talk about our efforts under the five strategic directions.

First, promoting sports in the community is an important element of our sports policy. In fact, more than 80 per cent of our recurrent expenditure on sports development has been used to promote sports in the community in the last financial year. We encourage our citizens to participate in sports. We also encourage them to be viewers of sports so as to cultivate a large audience base for our sports events.

As part of our efforts in promoting sports in the community, the Government has been actively supporting urban sports which are popular among young people. The Urban Sports Funding Scheme was launched in November 2023 in collaboration with the Schools Sports Federation of Hong Kong, China, providing trainings for 8 000 participants every year. This year, a total of around 38 000 sports activities will be organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department for over 2.7 million participants. Through these efforts, we are confident that we will foster a strong sporting culture in our city. As some of you may know, I do HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) regularly and jog along the Wan Chai promenade from time to time. I am sure participants in this room, and especially practitioners in the legal profession exercise more than I do. If you do not, please start today.

Apart from promoting sports in the community, the Government also endeavours to offer all-round support for elite athletes. This year, we allocate about HK\$940 million to the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI), representing an increase of more than 40 per cent over five years.

Our athletes achieved historic results by capturing two gold and two bronze medals in fencing and swimming at the Paris Olympic Games, achieving the best results ever in Hong Kong history. Our para athletes also won three gold, four silver and one bronze medals at the Paralympic Games, setting our best results since 2012. With the opening of the new facilities building in the HKSI, it is our goal to strengthen science and sports medicine support to athletes.

Talking about the HKSI, it also plays an important role in enhancing professionalism in the sports sector. The HKSI has set up a dedicated committee to oversee the development of sports medicine and sports science. And we will continue to use sports science and the latest technology to help our elite athletes to improve performance and to excel on international stages.

In terms of sports events, the Government is committed to promoting Hong Kong as a centre for major international sports events. With the support of the "M" Mark Scheme, Hong Kong plays host to a number of significant sports events. Just in the first month of 2025, we already have Hong Kong Tennis Open, Half Marathon (Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HK Section) Half

Marathon), bowling World Cup and para bowling World Champions (2025 International Bowling Federation World Cup and Para Bowling World Championships). In fact, I have seen many of you at least in these major international sports events. They will not only help cultivate the atmosphere of sports in Hong Kong, the players, their crew as well as viewers from all over the world, will also bring additional spending to Hong Kong. These all add impetus and vitality to the economy of Hong Kong.

That brings me to the final, but of course not least important, strategic direction of developing sports as an industry. Our efforts in promoting sports in the community will cultivate an audience base for sports events. Major sports events will attract people to Hong Kong, bringing consumption on accommodation, catering, transport and other items that promote economic development. Our efforts in enhancing professionalism also encourage spending on sports apparels and professional services. These all contribute to developing sports as an industry.

With the commencement of the Kai Tak Sports Park, Hong Kong sports teams will have ample opportunities to compete at our own turf. This will help develop peripheral products, including merchandise sales, venue management, refereeing, training, event coordination, etc. I sincerely invite you all to join me in supporting the Hong Kong, China team in the second leg of 43rd Guangdong–Hong Kong Cup to be staged at the Hong Kong Stadium next Wednesday (January 22).

I hope what I said just now, will not bore you but give you an idea of our efforts in promoting sports development. It is certainly a fast-moving and exciting area in Hong Kong. Along our path of driving sports development, it is important and essential to have an efficient and robust mechanism for resolving sports-related disputes. This is crucial to the further advancement of sports development. Efficiency and credibility in handling and resolving conflicts will avoid and mitigate potential drastic impact that a long process of seeking redress may have on athletes' career.

In this regard, I understand that many professional organisations in the legal sector and the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC) have been advocating the development of a sports dispute resolution system. In the Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address, it was announced that the Government would support the industry to launch a pilot scheme on sports dispute resolution in Hong Kong. My bureau fully supports this initiative. I am sure the SF&OC and the sports sector will continue to contribute professional sports knowledge in formulating the specific detail of the pilot scheme.

Before I close, I would like to thank Nick and the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre again for organising this very worthy programme, and all speakers for sharing your insights for the betterment of the sports industry.

I wish the programme a resounding success. Thank you very much.