

# Speech by SJ at 3rd ICC International Commercial Mediation Competition – Hong Kong’s opening ceremony and cocktail reception (English only) (with photo)

Following is the keynote speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the opening ceremony and cocktail reception of the 3rd ICC International Commercial Mediation Competition – Hong Kong today (December 8):

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very delighted to be here today, seeing some familiar faces, as well as so many young ones. I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to the International Chamber of Commerce – Hong Kong (ICC-HK), along with the professional mediators, adjudicators, sponsors, supporting organisations, volunteers, teachers, students and many others who have dedicated their time and efforts to bring this competition to life.

ICC International Commercial Mediation Competition

The ICC International Commercial Mediation Competition serves as an important platform that offers university students from around the globe the opportunity to apply mediation advocacy skills in simulated mediation for commercial disputes, and gain a thorough understanding of the mediation process. This experience also provides the chance to meet new friends and exchange valuable perspectives.

The ICC International Commercial Mediation Competition – Hong Kong is now in its third iteration. The last competition was held online in 2020, spanning 16 time zones. This time, I am truly excited that we get to see everybody here in Hong Kong. We are pleased to welcome 18 teams to the competition. The champion team will gain the qualifications to attend the annual ICC Mediation Competition at the ICC global headquarters in Paris next February. This will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I must admit I am a bit jealous.

Latest mediation developments in Hong Kong

Mediation continues to grow in popularity worldwide as an effective mechanism for resolving disputes. It provides a confidential and safe space facilitating parties to express their views candidly, often leading to creative and mutually beneficial solutions. Mediation is typically quicker and less costly than litigation, allows parties to preserve their relationships, and in turn promotes harmony and peace in society. For these

reasons, the Department of Justice of Hong Kong (DoJ) has always been a keen supporter of mediation.

The year 2024 has been fruitful for Hong Kong in terms of advancements in mediation. As a pioneer in capacity building, DoJ hosted the inaugural Greater Bay Area (GBA) Mediator Training Course in August 2024, providing training to approximately 400 participants in cross-boundary dispute mediation. Furthermore, DoJ continues to co-organise the latest rounds of the Investment Law and Investor-State Mediation Training in May and November 2024, and has over the years offered investment law and investor-state mediator training to more than 250 mediators and state officials from about 40 jurisdictions.

We anticipate a very busy year ahead in 2025 and are eager to continue our important work in promoting the wider use of mediation. As we proudly announced just last month during Hong Kong Legal Week 2024, the Hong Kong Government will, as a matter of general policy, incorporate a mediation clause in all government contracts requiring parties to mediate first in case of dispute. We hope that by taking the lead, the Government will inspire the private sector to follow suit. Apart from appealing to businesses, on a community level, the Pilot Scheme on Community Mediation will be introduced to raise the awareness of the general public in using mediation to resolve daily disputes. Together, we aim to deepen the mediation culture in Hong Kong.

On the international front, the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed) headquarters is set to be established in Hong Kong in 2025, making it the world's first intergovernmental legal organisation dedicated to resolving international disputes through mediation. Upon its establishment, IOMed will offer accessible, flexible, cost-effective, and efficient mediation services, strengthening Hong Kong's position as a global hub for international mediation.

To foster a mediation culture in society, it is crucial to start early and broad. We are always excited to connect with young people like many of you here. In addition to co-organising the ICC International Commercial Mediation Competition, we have consistently supported peer mediation initiatives, including co-organising the Hong Kong Secondary School Peer Mediation Competition, which aims at exposing students to mediation concepts and equipping them with essential skills for resolving real-life problems. The Department of Justice will continue to champion these efforts.

#### Concluding remarks

As more people recognise the benefits of mediation, increasing resources are being invested in its development. Mediation is not just a process; it is becoming an essential skill across industries and jurisdictions. What a wonderful time it is to get involved and gain exposure. I believe mediation shapes the future – and you are that future.

I sincerely hope you take away valuable insights from this competition, and I wish you all the very best. Make lots of friends, and most importantly,

have a lot of fun in Hong Kong! Thank you.

