

Speech by SJ at AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre Establishment Anniversary & MOU Signing Ceremony (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the Asian African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre Establishment Anniversary & MOU Signing Ceremony today (May 25):

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

Good afternoon. It is my great privilege to address you all as we gather here to celebrate the first anniversary of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre this evening.

Marking the centre's first anniversary, I am encouraged to reflect upon Hong Kong's ever-closer relationship with AALCO. We have gone from strength to strength since our first participation in AALCO's Annual Session as part of the Chinese delegation back in 2015, followed by Hong Kong hosting the 59th Annual Session of AALCO in hybrid mode in November 2021, and the announcement of the establishment of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre at the same Annual Session. With the centre opening its doors this time last year, here I wish to give my thanks to AALCO and the Secretary-General and his staff at the secretariat for their efforts in making this happen, transforming an idea to establish a new AALCO arbitration centre in 2018 to where we are today.

Special thanks and gratitude must also go to the staunch, effective and lasting support and immense trust of the Central People's Government, without which our collaborations with AALCO cannot be possible. Being a Special Administrative Region and enjoying the unique advantages afforded to us, notably our common law system under the principle of "one country, two systems", the establishment of the sixth AALCO Regional Arbitration Centre in Hong Kong reflects the spirit of the Belt and Road Initiative launched by President Xi a decade ago, and contributes to strengthening co-operation in this region and also among Asian and African countries.

In addition to the unwavering support of the Central People's Government, Hong Kong has a wealth of legal and dispute resolution

professionals with attributes including cross-regional experience, legal and sector-specific expertise, multilingual proficiency and cultural diversity. The establishment and operation of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre goes a long way in enhancing the synergy between the legal, dispute resolution and business communities. Coupled with the provision of professional and quality legal and dispute resolution services in Hong Kong, I am very confident that the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre will significantly contribute to Hong Kong's position as a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the region and beyond.

This afternoon we will witness the signing of various Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre and various legal and dispute resolution organisations. We are also bearing witness to the hard work of Nick and his team in bringing together so many distinguished organisations for further co-operation. The signing of such MOUs will not only strengthen the co-operation between the organisations, but will also further the advancement of the legal and dispute resolution professions in Hong Kong, promoting and increasing the capacity of the use of dispute resolution mechanisms in Hong Kong and in the region.

It should therefore be of no surprise that Hong Kong has been ranked among the top five preferred seats for arbitration globally since 2015, and ranked the third most popular seat for arbitration in the most recent survey in 2021. This is due in part to our continued collaborations with international organisations such as AALCO, our robust and up-to-date dispute resolution framework such as updates to the law last year to allow outcome related fee structures for arbitration, and of course our close collaborations with the Mainland, providing for unique mechanisms such as the interim measures arrangement which has been in effect since 2019.

Ladies and gentlemen, collaborations with international organisations will continue. Our dispute resolution framework will continually be updated to reflect international practice. Our relationship with the Mainland will become ever stronger. There is no question that Hong Kong will continue to play a leading role as a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region and will do so for many years to come. On this note, I congratulate again the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre on its anniversary, and look forward to continuing our collaborations. Thank you.

