

Speech by SJ at Asia-Pacific International Private Law Summit 2024 (English only) (with photo/video)

Following are the welcome remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the Asia-Pacific International Private Law Summit 2024 under Hong Kong Legal Week 2024 today (November 4):

Commissioner Cui (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Mr Cui Jianchun); Professor Ignacio Tirado (Secretary-General of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law), Consuls General, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

A very good morning. For those joining us from different time zones, perhaps I should say good afternoon and also good evening. I am truly delighted to welcome you to the opening of the Hong Kong Legal Week 2024, and to the Asia-Pacific International Private Law Summit 2024.

Hong Kong Legal Week 2024

The Hong Kong Legal Week is an annual flagship event of the Department of Justice. Since its inception in 2019, the Hong Kong Legal Week has served as a dynamic forum where legal professionals, scholars, judges and experts come together to discuss critical legal issues that resonate not only within Hong Kong but throughout the wider Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

The theme of this year is "Hong Kong Common Law System: World-Class Springboard to China and Beyond". It emphasises Hong Kong's unique role as a gateway between China, the Asia Pacific and the world. Under the "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong is the only common law jurisdiction within China. Our strong legal foundation, coupled with our close ties with and support from the Mainland, positions us as a critical hub for legal and economic collaboration across the region and beyond.

Asia-Pacific International Private Law Summit 2024

We begin this week with today's Asia-Pacific International Private Law Summit 2024. Building on the success of the inaugural Summit in 2022, the Department of Justice once again partners with the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) to organise this Summit under the theme "Springboard to Opportunities: Utilising International Private Law and Technology to Facilitate Access to Credit, Investment, and Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific Region".

The Asia-Pacific region is home to enormous economic potential and encompasses a diverse array of legal systems. While this diversity enriches our legal and cultural landscape, it also introduces complexities and

uncertainties for businesses navigating cross-border transactions. To unlock the region's full economic potential and ensure long-term sustainable growth, harmonisation and modernisation of private law across the region is essential.

Recognising this need, today's summit gathers leading legal minds from across the Asia Pacific, together with experts from UNIDROIT, to explore how the unification and co-ordination of various areas of private law can support economic growth and facilitate smoother cross-border interactions throughout the region. We will be hearing from them on how international private law and emerging technologies can unlock new opportunities for sustainable economic growth across the region, and how Hong Kong may contribute in this regard.

Department of Justice's collaboration with UNIDROIT

In the past few years, the Department of Justice has closely collaborated with UNIDROIT to promote the development, implementation, and deeper understanding of private international law and international commercial law across the Asia-Pacific region.

In addition to these collaborative efforts, we are grateful for UNIDROIT's strong support to the Department of Justice's secondment programme, offering Hong Kong's legal professionals from both the public and private sectors the valuable opportunity to work at the UNIDROIT Secretariat in Rome. This experience not only deepens their expertise in international legal issues, but also bolsters Hong Kong's capacity in foreign-related legal matters.

I am very pleased to note that one of our former secondees will be moderating a panel later this morning, which testifies to the success of the secondment programme.

Capacity building

The secondment programme is one of the Department of Justice's many policy initiatives providing professional development opportunities to our legal talents. To further strengthen Hong Kong's position as a leading international legal and dispute resolution services centre in the Asia-Pacific region, the Department of Justice places great importance on nurturing legal talents with a global perspective and proficiency in foreign-related legal affairs. We are committed to establishing Hong Kong as a leading centre for capacity building in international law.

As outlined in our Chief Executive's Policy Address 2023 and 2024, the Department of Justice is setting up the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy. The Academy will regularly organise practical training courses, seminars, international exchange programmes and more to promote exchanges among talent in regions along the Belt and Road. It will also provide training for talent in the practice of foreign-related legal affairs for the country, and nurture legal talent conversant with international law, common law, civil law and the country's legal system.

A dedicated office and an expert committee have already been set up to facilitate the establishment of the Academy. We are grateful to have Professor Tirado as a member of the expert committee, and I am pleased to see many of our committee members participating in today's Summit.

To officially mark this new initiative, I am excited to announce that the launch ceremony for the Academy will take place on the final day of the Hong Kong Legal Week. I warmly invite all of you to join us for this significant occasion.

Other events

I also warmly welcome you to participate in an array of other events this week. Tomorrow, we will have the Second Legal Forum on Interconnectivity and Development co-organised with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR. At the Legal Forum, we are very pleased to have the General Counsel of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank deliver a keynote address on promoting good governance and high-quality development under international law. Legal experts will also share their insights on Hong Kong's role in China's institutional opening up, and rule of law as a risk management mechanism to safeguard sustainable development.

On Wednesday, we will host events under the theme "Beyond Litigation: The Vibrant Landscape of Alternative Dispute Resolution of Hong Kong". The day will explore three topical issues – the role of mediation in promoting a culture of mutual respect, harmony and inclusiveness, use of artificial intelligence in alternative dispute resolution, as well as the resolution of sports disputes. There will also be the 2024 Hong Kong Mediation Lecture in the evening, exploring the unique challenges and opportunities involved in the use of mediation in deals relating to natural resources.

Thursday's programme will focus on strengthening the rule of law in the Greater Bay Area. We will hear from experts on the proof of Hong Kong law and foreign law in the Mainland, the arrangement on mutual legal assistance in civil and commercial matters between the Mainland and Hong Kong, as well as legal services and juridical relations to facilitate and protect trade and social interactions between the Mainland and Hong Kong. The day will also feature a mock mediation session led by mediators from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macao, and a discussion on the Greater Bay Area mediation platform.

On Friday, apart from the launching ceremony of the Academy in the afternoon that I have just mentioned, we will explore how the rule of law in Hong Kong, together with different components of Hong Kong's legal and judicial system, are essential to provide the best business environment from the perspectives of our legal services profession and our enterprises, and how our legal professionals can play an important role along the Belt and Road.

Alongside this week's discussions, we are also featuring a special exhibition on the achievements in the construction of the rule of law of the People's Republic of China in the modern era, co-organised by the Ministry of

Justice of China and the Department of Justice, in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of People's Republic of China. The exhibition highlights key milestones in China's legal evolution, both domestically and in foreign-related areas, over the past 75 years. You are most welcome to visit the exhibition during the breaks or after the Summit. It is just in the exhibition hall adjacent to this conference room.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, as we look ahead to the discussions that will follow, I hope today's Summit will inspire all of us to explore new ideas and opportunities. Let's make the most of this moment to engage in meaningful exchanges and drive forward the future of international law.

On this note, I wish today's Summit every success and extend my sincere appreciation to all of you for joining us, whether online or in person. A special thanks to UNIDROIT for their unwavering support, and heartfelt gratitude to all my colleagues at the Department of Justice and our dedicated partners, whose hard work has made Hong Kong Legal Week 2024 a reality.

Thank you very much.

