

Speech by SJ at first session of APEC Structural Reform Ministerial Meeting (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, at the first session of the virtual Structural Reform Ministerial Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 2021 today (June 16):

Thank you Chair (Chair of the Structural Reform Ministerial Meeting, Dr David Clark).

First of all, may I thank and congratulate New Zealand for hosting this event.

For economic development to be sustainable, it is important to have a comprehensive legal framework and good regulatory practices conducive to sustainable growth. Hong Kong, China has launched its "Vision 2030 for Rule of Law" initiative in the spirit of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 17 goals under the Agenda address various global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and they are all interconnected, with the rule of law being a pillar for its successful implementation.

(A) Green technology and innovation

Indeed, with the well-designed regulation and proper legal framework, APEC economies can better encourage and promote green technology and structural reforms for greener and renewable energy, energy efficiency and green buildings, green transportation, and waste reduction and recycling. Green innovative technologies and green infrastructure play an important role in our structural reform for economic recovery, not only by improving our living environment, but also creating economic opportunities and contributing to sustainable growth in the region. Hong Kong, China has set up a Green Tech Fund to fund green research and development projects in the community.

(B) Green finance

The development of green tech and innovation has to be supported by green finance. As the first signatory in Asia to the Green Bond Pledge, we continue to expand our Government Green Bond Programme to issue more green bonds totalling US\$22.5 billion over the next five years. Last month, a new Green and Sustainable Finance Grant Scheme was launched to subsidise eligible bond issuers and loan borrowers. Hong Kong, China is committed to supporting APEC's sustainable growth, sharing experience gained from working as a green finance and deal-making centre.

(C) Modern technology for green recovery

With MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) a driver of green tech, innovation and growth, the pursuit of structural reform through harnessing

modern digital technology to improve ease of doing business and access to justice for MSMEs, especially through developing online dispute resolution (ODR), are vital to expedite inclusive and sustainable economic growth and recovery.

The APEC ODR Collaborative Framework (the Framework), spearheaded by the Economic Committee, is an exemplary initiative to help economies boost business recovery and sustainable growth, in line with the goals of EAASR (Enhanced APEC Agenda for Structural Reform). It will help APEC overcome geographical barriers, reduce carbon emissions and save time, costs and paper in the dispute resolution process. We also look forward to the support from our representatives in ABAC (APEC Business Advisory Council) for the full implementation of the Framework.

In line with the APEC ODR Framework, Hong Kong, China launched a COVID-19 ODR Scheme in June last year providing for online negotiation, mediation and arbitration in order to counteract the supply chain disruptions brought about by the pandemic, causing a rising number of local and cross-border disputes. To aid further studies on ODR and accelerate digital innovation, we are collaborating with UNCITRAL (United Nations Commission on International Trade Law) to study such issues. This study could support innovation and development of the digital economy in the region, lowering the cost of doing business for MSMEs, and thereby facilitating sustainable economic recovery and growth.

(D) Support for structural reform initiatives

Lastly, I would like to express support for EAASR and the third EoDB (Ease of Doing Business) Action Plan as well as the 2022 AEPR (APEC Economic Policy Report) on "Structural Reform and a Green Recovery from Economic Shocks". I look forward to working with all our colleagues in APEC for an inclusive and sustainable growth in the region. Thank you.