

Secretary for Justice visits San Francisco

The Secretary for Justice of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Mr Wong Yan Lung, SC, visited San Francisco today (September 18, San Francisco time). His visit started with a meeting with the Bar Association of San Francisco, followed by an address at a luncheon organised by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in San Francisco and the Hong Kong Association of Northern California.

Mr Wong also spoke at a seminar at the School of Law, University of California, Berkeley, and officiated at the 20th anniversary reception of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in San Francisco.

Speaking on Hong Kong's legal system and services at the luncheon, Mr Wong emphasised that Hong Kong occupied a unique position when it came to doing business in China.

"This is primarily attributable to the rule of law and judicial independence in Hong Kong, which commands the essential trust and confidence among international investors," Mr Wong said.

"Hong Kong is the only territory in the world and in world history, where a capitalist economy operating on the common law exists as an inseparable part of socialist country with an entire different legal system," he continued.

Mr Wong also stressed that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government was determined to maintain Hong Kong as an international city, by complying with the highest international standards in various pursuits and participating actively as a member of the international community.

"In terms of protection of intellectual property rights, Hong Kong has established an effective legal framework for the protection of intellectual property rights which fully meets our obligations under the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. We also keep our legislation under constant review to make it in line with international developments," Mr Wong said.

Since 1997, Hong Kong has negotiated and concluded some 140 bilateral agreements with foreign governments. More than 200 multilateral treaties continue to apply to Hong Kong and almost 80 of these multilateral agreements do not apply to Mainland China. These bilateral and multilateral agreements cover a wide range of subjects such as air services, merchant shipping, investment promotion and protection, mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, surrender of fugitive offenders, transfer of sentenced persons, trafficking in narcotic drugs, human rights protection and private international law.

Mr Wong further commented on the close legal co-operation between Hong Kong and the Mainland. "One Country, Two Systems means greater opportunities and mutual benefit."

Mr Wong said that awards made by the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre were enforceable on the Mainland, and in all contracting states of the New York Convention.

"It is not just international corporations that find comfort in the depth and breadth of experience we have in our legal sector. Mainland parties also find there are benefits in using Hong Kong as a dispute resolution centre," he said.

In congratulating the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in San Francisco on its 20th anniversary, Mr Wong said that the Office had done a tremendous job over the past two decades in strengthening Hong Kong's economic, trade and investment ties with the very important economies of the western United States.

"Rule of law, clean governance, free flow of capital and information, level playing field, a simple and low tax regime, minimum government interference, and close ties with Mainland China make Hong Kong an ideal place for doing business and a perfect springboard to the China market," Director, Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office in San Francisco Ms Doris Cheung said. "Our Office will continue to serve as a bridge between Hong Kong and the western part of the United States, and endeavor to enhance the business and cultural links between the two places,"

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