

Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Agreement
signed with Finland

The Secretary for Justice, Mr Wong Yan Lung, SC, on behalf of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, and the Finnish Minister of Justice, Ms Tuija Brax, on behalf of the Republic of Finland, today (October 4) signed an agreement concerning Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (MLA) between the two parties.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mr Wong said international co-operation in judicial assistance was very important in weaving concerted efforts among jurisdictions for bringing criminals to justice.

"Hong Kong has been sparing no effort in strengthening its international law enforcement capabilities by expanding its network of bilateral arrangements with foreign jurisdictions concerning mutual legal assistance in criminal matters," he said.

The agreement is the 22nd of its kind that the HKSAR has signed to facilitate greater international co-operation to combat serious crimes. It will allow for a wide range of reciprocal assistance to be offered in the investigation and prosecution of criminal offences and in the proceedings relating to criminal matters. It contains all the essential features and safeguards for international agreements of this type.

The assistance provided for in the agreement mainly includes the following:

- * Taking evidence and statements.
- * Providing documents and information and transfer of exhibits.
- * Identifying and locating persons.
- * Effecting temporary transfer of persons in custody to provide assistance.
- * Facilitating the voluntary appearance of persons to provide assistance.
- * Executing requests for search and seizure.
- * Identifying, tracing, restraining, seizing, forfeiting and confiscating the proceeds of crime, and
- * Serving of documents.

The agreement will come into force 30 days after the

date on which both parties have notified each other in writing that their respective requirements have been complied with.

So far, the HKSAR has signed MLA Agreements with 21 other jurisdictions. They are: Australia, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Italy, Korea, Switzerland, Canada, the Philippines, Portugal, Ireland, the Netherlands, Ukraine, Singapore, Belgium, Denmark, Poland, Israel, Germany and Malaysia.

Ends/Thursday, October 4, 2007

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