

Third Asia Pacific Regional Conference of the Hague Conference on Private International Law begins today

The Third Asia Pacific Regional Conference of the Hague Conference on Private International Law opened today (September 24), with more than 100 delegates from 27 countries in the Asia Pacific region, including attorneys general, ministers of justice and secretaries of justice, participating.

The three-day Regional Conference, with the theme "International Co-operation Through Hague Conventions in the Asia Pacific", is jointly organised by the Department of Justice of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

The purpose of the conference is to build on the work and achievements from previous regional meetings in order to improve international co-operation in cross-border cases affecting individuals or commercial enterprises.

The latest work of the Hague Conference on Private International Law as well as matters relating to the implementation of the Hague Conventions in the Asia Pacific region will be discussed. Earlier regional conferences were held in Malaysia in 2005 and Australia in 2007.

The Secretary for Justice, Mr Wong Yan Lung, SC, said at the official opening today that the Hague Conventions could serve as a very sound basis for international co-operation and offer proactive responses to the needs of our time.

Recognising the need to enhance international legal and judicial co-operation in the age of globalisation, Mr Wong said: "The Hague Conventions stand out as shining examples of a pool of international instruments, especially in the field of civil and commercial matters, which may be readily tapped into by jurisdictions around the world. Many of these instruments have been tested by time and actual cases and we can testify that they have served Hong Kong very well over the years."

The Hague Conference on Private International Law has been working as a global forum for the progressive unification and harmonisation of private international law for 115 years.

The Hague Conventions are effective instruments to facilitate international co-operation in a wide range of civil and commercial legal matters. The Secretary General of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, Mr Hans van Loon, said: "The Hague Conventions are designed in such a manner that they have proved to be adaptable to the needs of different regions, and, at the same

time, they provide a connection to the global community."

A measure of their success is that over 125 states are parties to one or more Hague Conventions. Currently, nine Hague Conventions are applicable to Hong Kong, including the Statute of the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

The Hong Kong SAR has been participating in the work of the Hague Conference since 1998. Counsel from the Department of Justice have participated as members of the Chinese delegation in the negotiations of new Conventions and in the review of the operation of current Conventions.

"Hong Kong's participation in the Hague Conference is perhaps one of the best illustrations of the success of the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle", said Mr Wong.

He added that Hong Kong "shall continue to look to the Hague Conference and Hague Conventions to help us build bridges with other jurisdictions." The Conventions would serve as a very sound basis for international co-operation, he added.

The Conference in Hong Kong is an interactive working conference that will consist of presentations by selected speakers, panel discussions, as well as case studies or small group discussions. Delegates also include senior government representatives, in addition to prominent lawyers, academics and representatives of non-government organisations in the region.

The Conference will conclude on Friday (September 26).

For more information on the Hague Conference on Private International Law or the Hague Conventions, visit the website at <http://www.hcch.net>.

Ends/Wednesday, September 24, 2008
Issued at HKT 15:18

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