

HK is an ideal base for Hague Conference to develop its work  
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Hong Kong's attributes as a legal service centre in the Asia-Pacific region mean that it is an ideal base for the Hague Conference on Private International Law (Hague Conference) to develop its work and extend its influence in the region, the Secretary for Justice, Mr Wong Yan Lung, SC, said this morning on October 5 (Paris time) in Paris.

Mr Wong said Hong Kong is willing to collaborate and partner with the Hague Conference to promote the latter's work in the Asia-Pacific region.

"We have offered to facilitate the setting up of the Hague Conference's Regional Office in Hong Kong and to provide support and assistance," he said.

Hong Kong is one of the places in which the Apostille Convention has been smoothly and successfully implemented.

The Convention simplifies the formalities required for the authentication of foreign public documents. Under the Convention, the only formality required is a certificate issued pursuant to Article 4 of the Convention. And this certificate, entitled "Apostille", is recognised by all the Contracting Parties to the Convention.

"The Apostille Convention has proved very useful for the continuous development of Hong Kong as an international financial centre and business hub," Mr Wong said.

In recent years, there has been a substantial growth in demand for Apostilles in Hong Kong. The number of Apostilles issued in Hong Kong has been on the rise: from an annual average of 8,000 Apostilles for the years from 1997 to 2007, to over 21,000 Apostilles in 2010.

On the second day of his visit to Europe, Mr Wong addressed a roundtable session, which was an event to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Hague Apostille Convention, an eminent example of the 240 multinational treaties that continue to apply to Hong Kong after 1997.

While in Paris, Mr Wong called on the French Minister of Justice and Freedom, Mr Michel Mercier, and the Chinese Ambassador to France, Mr Kong Quan on October 5 (Paris time). In the afternoon, Mr Wong went to Brussels to meet the Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Ms Viviane Reding, as well as the Chinese Ambassador to the European Union,

Mr Song Zhe, and representatives of the Belgian Centre for Arbitration and Mediation.

Ends/Thursday, October 6, 2011