

SJ welcomes decision of Hague Conference to establish Asia Pacific Regional Office in Hong Kong

The Secretary for Justice, Mr Wong Yan Lung, SC, today (April 27) warmly welcomed the endorsement by the Council on General Affairs and Policy of the Hague Conference on Private International Law at its meeting from April 17 to 20, 2012 of the establishment of an Asia Pacific Regional Office in Hong Kong.

"The Hague Conference's decision is a significant vote of confidence in Hong Kong's position as a regional legal services centre by an international institution of high repute. With our world-class legal professionals and infrastructure, Hong Kong is an ideal springboard for the Hague Conference to develop its work and extend its influence in the region," Mr Wong said.

The formal consultation process on the proposal to establish a regional office in Hong Kong commenced in 2009. With strong support and assistance from the Central People's Government, the Department of Justice has been collaborating with the Permanent Bureau (Secretariat of the Hague Conference) and Members of the Hague Conference in the region to follow up on the matter.

The Secretary for Justice also actively lobbied for support of the proposal on his recent visits to Europe in October 2011 and to Korea and Japan in December 2011.

"The Hague Conventions enable Hong Kong to become part of the global network of jurisdictions that benefit from mutual legal co-operation. Hong Kong's participation in the Hague Conference is an excellent illustration of the success of the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle," Mr Wong added.

The Office will be the second regional office of the Hague Conference (in addition to the Latin American regional office in Buenos Aires) and the first in the region. The Office will

initially comprise a Representative, an office manager, legal officer(s) seconded by Member(s) of the Hague Conference and intern(s). The Council has also welcomed the appointment of the Honourable Mr Justice Hartmann, who has been a member of the International Hague Network of Judges for many years, as the first Representative of the Office after his retirement from the bench in July this year. The official opening of the Office is expected to be in the last quarter of this year.

Mr Wong said, "The Office will play the significant role of heightening awareness of the Hague Conventions and encourage States in the region to sign up for the Hague Conventions. It will also support the provision of training and technical assistance for the effective implementation of the Hague Conventions in the States of the region. This would benefit every State in that region as well as all Members of the Hague Conference."

The Hague Conference is a leading global intergovernmental organisation in the field of private international law. It develops and services multilateral legal instruments on private international law, commonly known as the Hague Conventions, which respond to global needs. There are now over 130 countries that are party to one or more of the Hague Conventions.

In addition to its statutory mission for progressive unification of private international law rules ranging from commercial law and banking law to international civil procedure and from child protection to matters of marriage and personal status, it also fosters international judicial and administrative co-operation in the area of private law, especially in the fields of protection of the family and children, of civil procedure and commercial law. China is a Member of the Hague Conference and representatives from the Hong Kong SAR participate in the work of the Hague Conference as members of the Chinese delegation.

Ends/Friday, April 27, 2012