

Government determined to promote mediation services (with photos)

The Government is determined to promote Hong Kong's legal and dispute resolution services, including mediation services, and has attached great importance to work closely with mediation bodies and other stakeholders, as well as fostering a favourable environment for mediation and enhancing the requisite infrastructure, the Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen, SC, said today (March 11).

Mr Yuen was speaking at the "Mediate First Pledge" reception organised by the Steering Committee on Mediation. He said, "Apart from being more cost-effective than litigation, mediation allows more flexibility in reaching settlements that satisfy the needs of the parties. It is more flexible than resolving disputes in courts and can also minimise arguments and the negative impact on relationship between parties."

"The Department of Justice (DoJ) firmly believes that the promotion of mediation services will benefit the long-term development of Hong Kong, and will also strengthen Hong Kong's competitiveness, including enhancing Hong Kong's status as an international financial and commercial centre."

Looking ahead, Mr Yuen said that the DoJ, with the assistance of the Steering Committee on Mediation and other stakeholders, has been working on various initiatives to ensure a sustainable and healthy development of mediation in Hong Kong, including examining the introduction of an apology legislation and strengthening the specialisation of mediation.

Also speaking at the reception, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court, Mr Justice Barnabas Fung Wah, pointed out that the settlements reached by mediation are a win-win situation which can go beyond the relief given by court to a single party.

"Resolving disputes by mediation is time-saving and economic. It can reduce the cost paid by the parties in continued disputes, including emotional distress. Therefore, promoting and commending 'mediate first' in the community is worthwhile," Mr Justice Fung said.

About 30 business associations, companies and organisations signed the "Mediate First Pledge" at the reception today, pledging to consider mediation first as a means to resolve disputes.

"Mediate First Pledge" reception is organised by the Public Education and Publicity Sub-committee of the Steering Committee on Mediation. More than 240 representatives of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), private companies, business associations and professional bodies, as well as professionals in the legal and mediation sectors, joined the reception.

In order to increase the awareness of SMEs on the use of mediation, the Steering Committee on Mediation organised a seminar on mediation before the reception to foster their understanding on mediation process. More than 150 people attended the seminar.

Ends/Wednesday, March 11, 2015

