

Nurturing legal talents through secondment to international organisations

With the support of the Central People's Government and the assistance of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (OCMFA), the Department of Justice (DoJ) has put in place programmes to second local legal talents to several international organisations. To support the DoJ's continuous efforts in this respect and encourage more local young legal talents to grasp the precious opportunities presented, the OCMFA hosted the launching ceremony for the Secondment of Young Professionals from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) to International Law Organisations today (September 10).

Through participating in the work of international organisations, local legal professionals can enhance their knowledge of international legal matters and develop global vision. Nurturing Hong Kong's legal talents is crucial for the sustainable development of the legal community, for consolidating Hong Kong's position as a leading international legal and dispute resolution services centre and for the long-term development of the rule of law, matters to which the Central Authorities and the HKSAR Government have attached great importance.

The Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR, Mr Liu Guangyuan, remarked, "Arranging secondment for young talents from the HKSAR to international organisations reflects the support and affection from the Central People's Government towards Hong Kong's youth. It also marks an achievement of national diplomacy to the benefit of the youth, as well as manifests the advantage under 'one country, two systems'. I wish these young talents will gain knowledge and experience through taking part in the international arena, and bring glory to our country and Hong Kong."

The Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, said, "I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its tremendous efforts in facilitating the secondment programmes between the HKSAR and international organisations, enabling local young legal talents to take part in the international arena. It truly reflects the care of the country towards the Hong Kong youth, while demonstrating the unique advantages of 'one country, two systems'. I also hope that young legal talents would seize the precious opportunities to gain different exposure, and proactively integrate into and contribute to national development in the future."

With the Central People's Government's staunch support and the HKSAR Government's hard work, the secondment programmes have achieved substantive progress recently. The number of positions available is historically high and some positions are now open to non-government officers, which is different from the previous programmes.

Last December, the DoJ signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Hague Conference on Private International Law for a secondment arrangement, under which a counsel from the DoJ and a solicitor in private practice will commence their six-month secondment programmes this month and in February 2022 respectively. This puts in place Hong Kong's very first secondment programme open to local legal professionals in both the public and private sectors.

In May 2021, the DoJ also signed an MOU with the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law for a secondment programme open to legal professionals in both the public and private sectors. In addition, an agreement with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was reached in June this year for the secondment of a DoJ legal officer to the legal department of the AIIB for 12 months, which commenced on August 23.

The Chairman of the Asian Academy of International Law (AAIL), Dr Anthony Neoh, SC, said he was delighted to learn that Hong Kong legal professionals have been given more opportunities to participate in the work of international organisations. He said, "Providing training in areas of international law to legal practitioners is one of our objectives and being able to work in international organisations is also a remarkable opportunity. With the support from the DoJ, the AAIL encourages local law graduates to enrol in, as well as nominates suitable candidates for, the Judicial Fellowship Programme of the International Court of Justice, through which young graduates will be able to learn from international law experts and gain exposure. The experience and exposure are invaluable for their development."

Welcoming the participation by solicitors in private practice in the secondment, the President of the Law Society of Hong Kong, Mr Chan Chak-ming, said, "I am grateful to the Central Authorities and the HKSAR Government for extending the eligibility of the secondment programme to lawyers in private practice as it used to be open to lawyers from the public sector only. Those from the private sector are now

able to widen their horizons and directly participate in the development of international law, with a view to contributing to the legal sector in Hong Kong in the future."

The DoJ will continue to explore with other renowned international organisations secondment opportunities through which Hong Kong legal professionals could gain valuable work experiences and receive training in diverse areas of international law.

Ends/Friday, September 10, 2021