

Fourth Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Departments Joint Conference achieves good progress in mediation, arbitration and other areas (with photos)

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The fourth Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Departments Joint Conference held online in Hong Kong today (December 16) achieved good progress in various areas, including mediation, arbitration, the support for Hong Kong and Macao lawyers practicing in the nine Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), and featured an in-depth exchange among the legal departments of the three places.

Those attending the Joint Conference included the Director-General of the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province, Mr Chen Xudong; the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC; the Deputy Secretary for Justice, Mr Cheung Kwok-kwan; and the Secretary for Administration and Justice of the Macao Special Administrative Region Government, Mr Cheong Weng Chon.

Speaking as the Chairman of the Greater Bay Area Task Force to be established by the Department of Justice, Mr Cheung said that the purpose for setting up the Joint Conference is to strengthen the legal exchanges and collaboration among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao with a view to jointly promoting the high-quality developments in the GBA.

At the meeting, the three parties endorsed the Greater Bay Area Cross-Boundary Disputes Mediation Model Rules, facilitating the further alignment of the mediation mechanisms in the three places.

Mr Cheung said that the Mediation Model Rules, complementing the Greater Bay Area Mediator Accreditation Standards and the Greater Bay Area Mediator Code of Conduct Best Practice endorsed and implemented last year, will serve as a model for reference to provide guidance to the mediation institutions and mediators in the GBA for their voluntary adoption. Looking ahead, the three places will actively pursue the establishment of a panel of GBA mediators. The setting of GBA mediation standards will facilitate the use of mediation by the business sector and the public in the three places to resolve cross-boundary disputes in the GBA.

He pointed out that the drafting, deliberation and endorsement of the Mediation

Model Rules were made possible by the joint efforts of the three parties, and he extended his gratitude to the officers concerned.

On arbitration, the three parties explored matters relating to the operation of the establishment of a panel of recommended GBA arbitrators, and actively discussed matters including the qualification process, the management of the panel and the mechanism for review, with the common goal of promoting the complementary strengths of arbitration resources and the harmonisation of arbitration mechanisms in the three places. The three legal departments will continue to explore and study the relevant matters at the working level after the meeting for better preparation for future work.

The three parties also discussed matters including the support for Hong Kong and Macao lawyers practicing in the nine Mainland cities of the GBA, and the capacity building for the staff of the three departments. Mr Lam said he was pleased to learn that Hong Kong and Macao lawyers had made good progress in obtaining practice certificates and commencing practice in the nine Mainland cities. He was particularly grateful to the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province for its great efforts in this regard.

In concluding the meeting, Mr Lam stressed that the continual close collaboration among the three legal departments has not been disrupted despite the COVID-19 epidemic. Fruitful results achieved through the Joint Conference have made significant contributions to the alignment and harmonisation of rules and mechanisms in the GBA.

Following the first Joint Conference held in Hong Kong in 2019, Mr Lam said he was glad that the fourth Joint Conference was hosted by Hong Kong again this year. He looked forward to next year's Joint Conference, with a view to maintaining closer co-operation among the three places.

Ends/Friday, December 16, 2022