

DSJ highlights Hong Kong's robust rule of law in The Hague (with photos)

The Deputy Secretary for Justice, Mr Cheung Kwok-kwan, visited Geneva, Switzerland and The Hague, the Netherlands, on March 9 (Geneva time) to promote in both places the unique strengths of Hong Kong's legal system, which are conducive to the optimisation of international investment and business environment.

In the morning in Geneva, Mr Cheung, accompanied by the Permanent Representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China to the World Trade Organization (WTO), Mr Laurie Lo, met with the Director-General of the WTO, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, to exchange views on various topics of mutual interest, and to lay down a more solid foundation for future work.

Mr Cheung said that Hong Kong, China (HKC), a founding member of the WTO, has for years been a firm supporter of a rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at the core, and is one of the most proactive and constructive WTO members.

He stressed that HKC, as the centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region, will continue to participate vigorously in and promote the reform of the Dispute Settlement Body under the WTO. He expressed his thanks to the WTO for their support to and acknowledgement of HKC.

He also called on the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland, Mr Chen Xu, and updated him on the latest legal developments in Hong Kong, and also learned more about the latest situation of the United Nations and other international organisations. Mr Cheung said that Hong Kong, the only common law jurisdiction in the country, would proactively assist in the country's foreign-related legal affairs.

In the afternoon after arriving in The Hague, the last stop of his Europe visit, Mr Cheung attended the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) reception, hosted by the PRC for over 200 delegates from around 90 member states attending the meeting of the HCCH's Council on General Affairs and Policy (CGAP). The HCCH is a global inter-governmental organisation which develops multilateral legal instruments to respond to global needs. The CGAP is the highest governing

body of the HCCH.

Speaking at the reception, Mr Cheung updated the representatives attending the event on the rule of law situation in Hong Kong, stressing that some media reports on "one country, two systems" and the enactment of the National Security Law (NSL) in recent years have been baseless and unsound.

Referring to the remarks made by the founder of the HCCH, Mr Tobias Asser, in 1900, Mr Cheung said that sovereignty is the cornerstone of international order and the principle of sovereignty should be respected. The autonomy of the nations in the domain of legislation should not be interfered with.

It is the Constitution of the PRC that gives the legislative backing and source of power for the Basic Law, and provides a solid legal basis for and the constitutional framework of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The Central Government fully supports Hong Kong to maintain the common law system.

He reiterated that Hong Kong's rule of law remains robust. Not only has the NSL restored the law and order of Hong Kong society, but has fortified the city's existing and solid legal inheritance. It has made Hong Kong the most desirable foothold of trade and investment in the entire Asia-Pacific region now and in the future.

Mr Cheung also thanked the HCCH for choosing Hong Kong as the venue for hosting the 6th HCCH Asia Pacific Week in celebration of the HCCH's 130th anniversary in September this year, which signifies a vote of confidence by the HCCH to Hong Kong's rule of law. This occasion will be the first large-scale celebration of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region and the world. He welcomed everyone to visit Hong Kong in person to witness the vibrancy, diversity, and prosperity of the events capital.

At the reception, Mr Cheung also exchanged views with the Secretary General of the HCCH, Dr Christophe Bernasconi, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the PRC to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mr Tan Jian, and ambassadors from other countries. He said that Hong Kong is committed to the development of private international law, and hopes that Hong Kong and the HCCH can forge closer co-operation.

Mr Cheung will continue his visit to The Hague today (March 10).

Ends/Friday, March 10, 2023