

DSJ fosters closer connection between HK and UN International Court of Justice and Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague (with photos)

The Deputy Secretary for Justice, Mr Cheung Kwok-kwan, continued the final leg of his visit to Europe in The Hague, the Netherlands, on March 10 (The Hague time).

In the morning, Mr Cheung first called on the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mr Tan Jian. They discussed various topics, such as Hong Kong's latest legal developments, and how Hong Kong can give full play to "going global and attracting foreign investment".

It was followed by a visit to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations responsible for resolving legal disputes between states in accordance with international law. At a meeting with Judge Xue Hanqin, the first female Chinese Judge of ICJ, and Judge Hilary Charlesworth of the ICJ, Mr Cheung gave an update of the latest legal developments in Hong Kong and the work of the Department of Justice (DoJ), and exchanged views on the use of various dispute resolution mechanisms handling international disputes.

He said that Hong Kong, as the centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region, attaches great importance to nurturing legal talent, and will continue to organise a wide range of capacity building activities and academic conferences. He hoped the ICJ judges can come to share their insights.

Mr Cheung then visited the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) to discuss with its Secretary-General, Dr Hab Marcin Czeplak, the future development of resolving disputes by way of arbitration. Established in 1899, the PCA is an intergovernmental organisation with over 120 contracting parties which aims to facilitate arbitration and other forms of dispute resolution between states.

He said under "one country, two systems", Hong Kong enjoys a unique advantage in having established a comprehensive framework for mutual legal assistance in civil and commercial matters with the Mainland. On arbitration, the city has concluded three arrangements with the Mainland, including arrangements concerning mutual enforcement of arbitral awards, and an arrangement concerning mutual assistance in court-ordered interim measures in aid of arbitral proceedings. These arrangements

will render arbitral proceedings seated in Hong Kong to have unique advantages.

He pointed out that given the limitless opportunities brought about to the international communities by the national strategies including the National 14th Five-Year Plan, the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and the Belt and Road Initiative, Hong Kong, being the only common law jurisdiction in China, will continue to enhance our mutual legal assistance framework with the Mainland, consolidating Hong Kong's status as the centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-pacific region.

Mr Cheung also told the PCA that the International Council for Commercial Arbitration (ICCA) Congress is scheduled to be held in Hong Kong in May 2024 (ICCA 2024), pointing out that the holding of this Congress in the city, the largest regular international arbitration conference of its kind worldwide, is a vote of confidence in Hong Kong being the centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region. He hoped to welcome members of the PCA to Hong Kong for the ICCA 2024.

Mr Cheung will depart The Hague this morning (March 11, The Hague time) and will return to Hong Kong in the morning of March 12.

Ends/Saturday, March 11, 2023