

LCQ1: Promoting development of dispute resolution services

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Alex Fan and a reply by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, in the Legislative Council today (May 20):

Question:

The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan proposes supporting Hong Kong in strengthening its position as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the specific long-term strategies in place to facilitate the development of the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed), so as to enable Hong Kong's common law system to interface effectively with the legal systems of different regions (including the civil law and sharia law), and support the country's strategic layout for the Belt and Road Initiative and Global South countries;

(2) how it will consolidate Hong Kong's existing legal and dispute resolution resources, and leverage the advantages of the common law system and IOMed's headquarters status to strengthen the development of dispute resolution services, such as setting up dedicated funds, improving arbitration and mediation talent training, conducting research on the compatibility of different legal systems, and strengthening IOMed's collaborative mechanism; and

(3) how it will apply digital technology to further assist the Judiciary and dispute resolution institutions in enhancing efficiency, such as by developing AI online dispute resolution platforms and using AI to assist in case management, document drafting, legal research and multilingual translation, thereby lowering the costs for cross-boundary users of Hong Kong's dispute resolution services and accelerate the digital transformation of traditional legal services?

Reply:

President,

In response to the questions raised by Professor the Hon Alex Fan, the reply is as follows:

(1) The International Organization for Mediation (IOMed) is a treaty-based independent intergovernmental international organisation. The Governing Council is its decision-making body and the Secretary-General, Professor Teresa Cheng, leads the daily operation of the IOMed Secretariat in accordance with the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation (Convention) and the relevant rules and regulations. The National 15th Five-Year Plan mentions supporting the IOMed to further its role. Although the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

(HKSAR) Government does not participate directly in the daily operation of the IOMed, it will fully support and co-operate with the work of the IOMed.

The IOMed is open for joining by any country in the world, and the mediation proceedings of the IOMed are conducted in accordance with the Convention and its mediation rules, which are in the nature of internationalised procedures for dispute resolution. The existing Contracting States and Signatory States of the Convention include countries which implement common law, civil law, Islamic law and other legal systems.

The HKSAR Government supports and co-operates with the work of the IOMed in the following aspects. Firstly, the IOMed Headquarters is converted from the Old Wan Chai Police Station, a Grade II historic building, with the support of the HKSAR Government. The HKSAR Government will continue to provide support on the maintenance of the Headquarters. Secondly, the Department of Justice (DoJ) actively encourages Hong Kong legal professionals to participate in the work of the IOMed. In this regard, 10 out of the 24 mediators designated by our country to the IOMed's General Panel of Mediators come from Hong Kong. In addition to the four Government Counsel seconded previously, the DoJ has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the IOMed in January 2026 for the secondment of Hong Kong legal professionals.

Thirdly, building on the HKSAR Government's policy on the incorporation of mediation clauses in government contracts, the DoJ is proactively exploring ways to promote the inclusion of the IOMed mediation as an option in suitable international agreements to which the HKSAR Government is a party. The HKSAR Government and the IOMed are also exploring the establishment of a dedicated panel of mediators for commodities trading disputes.

Lastly, the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy will promote the IOMed through training and capacity-building programmes. The HKSAR Government also enhances promotion of the IOMed by supporting or co-organising conferences with the IOMed. For example, with the support of the DoJ, the IOMed has just successfully organised the inaugural Global Mediation Summit on May 8, 2026 during the Mediation Week. The HKSAR Government is also exploring opportunities to promote the IOMed later this year during Legal Week, the Belt and Road Summit, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Finance Ministers' Meeting.

(2) In strengthening Hong Kong's unique position as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre, resources, whether in terms of financial resources, human resources or facilities, present a real challenge.

The DoJ is in the process of preparing for the construction of the Hong Kong International Legal Service Building, which will be adjacent to the headquarters of the IOMed. The building will be equipped with world-class conference halls, training facilities, including moot courts; dispute resolution facilities, including arbitration and mediation facilities; office space for local and international law-related organisations, and

provide additional space for the IOMed. The Hong Kong International Legal Service Building is not only a necessary upgrade on quality and quantity to the existing facilities, but also conducive to the consolidation of relevant legal services facilities to create synergy.

Subject to available resources, the DoJ will also strengthen the role and functions of the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy and set up its headquarters in the Hong Kong International Legal Service Building.

The DoJ will also continue to attract organisations providing international legal and dispute resolution services to set up offices in Hong Kong to promote international co-operation, such as the Asia-Pacific Liaison Office of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law to be set up this year.

Building on Hong Kong's common law-based system implemented in Hong Kong, the DoJ will keep pace with the times, benchmark international standards and trends, and take the lead in reviewing and amending laws relating to dispute resolution, such as the Mediation Ordinance and the Arbitration Ordinance.

While the DoJ plays a leading role in these tasks, legal professional bodies, including the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association, dispute resolution organisations and other legal organisations, should also take the initiative to participate. The DoJ looks forward to hearing any views and collaborating with different parties.

(3) We understand that the Judiciary has been committed to making good use of technology to enhance the efficiency of court operations, and has taken key technological initiatives, such as equipping courts with speech-to-text systems, exploring and piloting the use of generative AI tools to assist in legal research and analysis, and formulating guidelines for the use of generative AI for judges and judicial officers, legal practitioners and other court users.

The DoJ recognised the importance of lawtech and AI and therefore established the Consultation Group on LawTech Development in January 2025. In 2025, with the assistance of the Consultation Group, the DoJ organised four rounds of LexGoTech Roundtable, published the LexGoTech Roundtables Report, organised the inaugural Hong Kong LawTech Fest during the Legal Week last year, and launched the Survey of LawTech Service Providers in Hong Kong. The DoJ has also set up the Inter-Departmental Working Group to Review Legislation to Support Wider Application of AI to take the lead in reviewing the relevant laws in Hong Kong.

In addition, the DoJ proactively supported, for example, the eBRAM International Online Dispute Resolution Centre in the launching of the APEC Online Dispute Resolution Platform and participated in the Pilot Scheme on Sports Dispute Resolution, promoting Hong Kong as an international sports dispute resolution centre and at the same time enhancing the use of lawtech.

Thank you, President.

Ends/Wednesday, May 20, 2026