

**World Law Congress 2025: Panel 38 – Chinese Path to Modernization  
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**Introduction**

1. Thank you for the organizers for arranging this interesting panel session. My presentation today will focus on Hong Kong's role as a "super-connector" and a "super value-adder" between the Mainland and the rest of the world under the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, contributing to China's modernization from the legal perspective.

**"One Country, Two Systems" and contribution to China's modernization**

2. President Xi at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), stressed that the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions are part and parcel of building a great China. He also stressed that the common law system would be maintained in Hong Kong, and the successful practice of "One Country, Two Systems" in Hong Kong is an important part of China's historic process.

Common Law System

3. Under the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, Hong Kong maintains its common law system while the Mainland China practices a civil law system. Hong Kong's distinct bilingual common law legal system strengthens its position as a premier international financial and commercial hub. As the only common law jurisdiction in China, and the only Chinese and English bilingual common law jurisdiction in the world, Hong Kong exercises a high degree of autonomy, enjoys independent judicial power, including the power of final adjudication on our own.

External Affairs

4. In addition to our common law system, another unique strength of Hong Kong is our competence to conduct external affairs. We have been authorized to use the name

“Hong Kong, China” to maintain and develop relations and conclude and implement agreements on our own, with foreign states and regions and international organizations, in appropriate fields. For example, the HKSAR has concluded over 260 bilateral agreements with over 70 countries over the world. The major topics which these agreements cover are air services, investment promotion and protection, mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and avoidance of double taxation. Over 250 multilateral international conventions are applicable to the HKSAR, some of which do not apply to Mainland China.

5. In addition, the HKSAR participates as part of the Chinese delegation in international organisations and conferences limited to States, such as HCCH, UNCITRAL and UNIDROIT meetings. For international organisations such as the WTO and APEC, we participate on our own under the name “Hong Kong, China”.

6. At the same time, a number of international organisations have established their presence in Hong Kong, such as the Bank for International Settlements, the International Finance Corporation, HCCH Regional Office for Asia Pacific and the AALCO Regional Arbitration Centre. In the very near future, the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed) will be established in Hong Kong. IOMed will be the world’s first intergovernmental international organisation dedicated to resolving international disputes through mediation. The negotiations of the convention establishing IOMed has been concluded last year and it is expected that the Convention will be signed in Hong Kong this year.

7. Given our unique strength and the long tradition of rule of law, Hong Kong has been ranked as one of the most competitive economies and topped the world in "international trade" and "business legislation" in the World Competitiveness Yearbook 2024. In the 2025 International Arbitration Survey conducted by the Queen Mary University of London, Hong Kong ranked top 2 most preferred arbitration seat in the world and top 1 most preferred arbitration seat in Asia Pacific. All these support Hong Kong to be a "super-connector" and a "super value-adder" between the Mainland and the rest of the world, serving as a two-way springboard for attracting overseas enterprises and for Mainland enterprises to "go global". This demonstrates how Hong Kong leverages its unique common law system and international connectivity to contribute to China’s broader modernization goals by fostering legal integration, upholding the rule of law, and supporting economic and social development both regionally and globally.

## Policy Support

8. Furthermore, Hong Kong has the distinct advantage of enjoying the strong support of the country and being closely connected to the world. For example, the “14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan” has supported the development of Hong Kong in eight key areas or “eight centres”, including the international financial centre, international innovation and technology centre, East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, international trade centre, international shipping centre, international aviation hub, centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region as well as regional intellectual property trading centre.

9. Hong Kong’s position as an international hub for financial and logistical services is further strengthened under “Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area”. Under the Outline Development Plan, the Greater Bay Area, with Hong Kong as one of the core cities, serves as a demonstration zone for high-quality development and a pioneering region for the Chinese path to modernization.

10. Equipped with a wealth of legal talents who are multi-lingual with relevant expertise, Hong Kong plays a vital role in advancing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Enterprises are encouraged to leverage Hong Kong’s robust legal system and dispute resolution services, and its strategic position as a gateway to global markets, partnering with Hong Kong businesses to expand internationally, and maximize opportunities under the BRI framework.

## **Conclusion**

11. In short, through the unique role of Hong Kong under the principle of “One Country, Two Systems” as mentioned above, Hong Kong has made various contributions to the path of China’s modernization. Hong Kong will continue to leverage on our various attributes as “super-connector” and “super-value-adder” to contribute to high-quality development of China. Thank you very much.