

Hong Kong Maritime Week 2025
Legal Seminar for Green Shipping in Greater Bay Area—
Addressing Risks & Opportunities

21 November 2025 (Friday), 14:30

Opening Remarks of Mr Clifford Tavares,
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Deputy Director Cheng (Mr Cheng Zhangmin, Deputy Director of the Ocean Development Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality), Mr Wong (Mr Huen Wong, Council Member of SCIA, Executive Chairman of SCIA(HK)), Mr Huang (Deputy Director of the Research Department (Maritime Arbitration Centre) of SCIA), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

1. Good afternoon. It is my great pleasure to speak at today's legal seminar organised by the Shenzhen Court of International Arbitration ("SCIA") and the South China International Arbitration Center (Hong Kong) ("SCIA(HK)") as part of the Hong Kong Maritime Week 2025.

2. The event-packed Maritime Week gathers industry leaders and experts from all over the world to explore the latest trends in the global maritime industry, ranging from Belt and Road and Greater Bay Area (“GBA”) developments, green shipping, maritime law and arbitration, maritime technology, to building up of maritime talent pool.

3. Today’s legal seminar centers on green shipping, which is of course a widely discussed topic, not least because of the inevitable challenge that climate change has brought to governments around the world nowadays. The GBA, with its dynamic economies and strategic positioning, offers unparalleled potential for advancing green shipping initiatives.

4. As a major bunkering port and an international maritime centre with a strategic geographical location in the centre of Asia and at the heart of the Far East trade route, Hong Kong has taken an active role to dovetail with the development direction and targets of China on carbon peak and carbon neutrality as set out in the National 14th Five-Year Plan, the measures on promoting the development of green ports and enhancing the promotion and application of clean maritime fuels as set out in the 14th Five-Year Plan Comprehensive Work Plan for Energy Conservation and Emission Reduction.

Why is green shipping important

5. Green shipping is vital for several reasons, primarily its potential to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and minimize the environmental impact of maritime activities. Transitioning to more sustainable practices can enhance air quality, protect marine ecosystems, and contribute to global efforts against climate change.

6. With International Maritime Organisation (IMO)'s target to reach net-zero carbon emissions from international shipping by or around 2050, green shipping is certainly the right avenue to fulfilling environmental, social and governance responsibilities in the global shipping context and the pathway to sustainability.

Challenges brought by green shipping

7. As the global maritime industry navigates towards green shipping, the industry is chartering a new territory with novel risks as well as opportunities. In particular, there are practical challenges to overcome when promoting green transformation of the shipping industry while maintaining the robustness of the shipping industry.

8. Practically, in terms of economy and technology, substantial investments in the innovation and development of green and low-carbon shipping technologies leading to the high upfront costs of green transformation, coupled with limited short-term profitability and uncertain demand trajectory, would pose financial and technical challenges to the shipping industry in moving towards green shipping.

9. Further, in terms of policy and governance, the development of green shipping would require dedicated and specific policy support taking into account the precise industry needs and resources allocation considerations.

10. Despite the above challenges, we still see the new opportunities and positive impact that green shipping could bring to the GBA maritime ecosystem as a whole.

Opportunities brought by green shipping

11. First of all, the development of green shipping has catalysed the refinement of the maritime legal framework to align with the latest global shipping landscape. In Hong Kong, with a view to complementing and encouraging the green transformation of the shipping industry, the Shipping Legislation (Use of Fuels and

Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance 2024 came into effect on 10 January 2025. It aims to allow vessels to use more environmentally friendly new fuels in Hong Kong waters under existing legislation in addition to traditional petroleum fuels, and to incorporate into the legislation additional safety and environmental considerations in relation to the use of such fuels.

12. Secondly, with supportive government measures and incentive policies in place, green transformation will bring about technological advancements and enhance the global competitiveness and innovation capability of the shipping industry. As an associate member of the IMO, the Hong Kong Government promulgated the Action Plan on Green Maritime Fuel Bunkering (“Action Plan”) in November 2024, setting out a multi-fuel strategy to gradually enable the provision of different green maritime fuels at the Hong Kong Port. Measures pursuant to the Action Plan include the launch of the Green Maritime Fuel Bunkering Incentive Scheme in June 2025 to encourage pioneer companies to develop green maritime fuel bunkering business in Hong Kong. With all the supportive measures of the Government, we are pleased to see that over 200 000 metric tonnes of biodiesel and LNG (liquefied natural gas) have been bunkered in Hong Kong since the first LNG

(liquefied natural gas) bunkering operation in February this year, involving a total of 13 LNG bunkering operations.

13. As announced in the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2025 ("Policy Address 2025"), the Hong Kong Government will focus on the development of bunkering of fuels, facilitate the trading of more green maritime fuels in Hong Kong, and assist in the export of Mainland-produced green maritime fuel. The Hong Kong Maritime and Port Development Board ("HKMPDB"), established in July this year, will assist the Government in formulating policies for the overall development of the maritime industry. In particular, the Manpower Development Committee of HKMPDB will devise a new scheme to sustain the availability of trainers on new skills for the industry and the training of talents for green fuel bunkering.

14. Thirdly, transformative developments and advancements in the shipping industry will call for more sophisticated and industry-specific professional legal support, leading to new opportunities for legal and dispute resolution industry.

Hong Kong's unique strengths in international arbitration

15. Hong Kong is consistently ranked among the world's top four shipping centres over the past 5 years under the Xinhua-Baltic

International Shipping Centre Development Index, and is the second most preferred seat of arbitration globally in the 2025 International Arbitration Survey conducted by the Queen Mary University of London. This is also backed by the strong national policy support to develop Hong Kong as an international shipping centre and a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region.

16. Hong Kong is the only common law jurisdiction within China and the only jurisdiction in the world with a Chinese-English bilingual common law system. Further, it has a strong pool of bilingual and experienced maritime legal and dispute resolution professionals. It also possesses an independent and pro-arbitration court system.

17. Internationally, Hong Kong is a favoured venue for resolution of shipping disputes. The Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) officially included Hong Kong as one of the four designated arbitration venues in its global standard maritime contracts in 2020. Arbitral awards made in Hong Kong are enforceable in over 170 jurisdictions contracting to the New York Convention.

18. Regionally, Hong Kong has concluded three arbitration-related mutual legal assistance arrangements with the Chinese Mainland. Two of these arrangements put in place a set of simplified and efficient procedures for enforcing arbitral awards across the boundary. Notably, the groundbreaking Interim Measures Arrangement allows party to arbitration proceedings seated in Hong Kong and administered by designated institutions to apply for interim measures from the Mainland courts for the preservation of assets, evidence and conduct during arbitration. SCIA(HK) is one of the designated institutions under the Arrangement.

19. Locally, Our Arbitration Ordinance (Cap. 609) is based on the UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration. It has been reviewed over the years. For example, the Ordinance has been amended to allow flexible arbitration funding options, including third party funding and outcome related fee structures for arbitration (ORFSA). The Department of Justice has recently set up a working group to consider the need to further refine our arbitration law to ensure it remains at the forefront of international development.

20. Within the GBA, talent nurturing and exchange is the key to sustainable development of green shipping and other evolving areas in the maritime industry. The series of courses on maritime legal

practice and latest developments co-organised by SCIA, the Dalian Maritime University Law School and the Ocean Development Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality since last year are examples of good efforts in training of talents in this regard.

21. Additionally, Hong Kong also offers unique support for international arbitration talents looking for opportunities in the GBA. We target to establish a panel of GBA arbitrators with Guangdong and Macao by the end of this year. The Immigration Facilitation Scheme for Persons Participating in Arbitral Proceedings in Hong Kong, as regularised and refined from its pilot scheme since March this year, allows individuals such as arbitrators, expert and factual witnesses, counsel in and parties to the arbitration, etc. to participate in arbitral proceedings in Hong Kong as visitors without the need to obtain an employment visa.

22. Ladies and gentlemen, leveraging on its unique advantages and strong policy support at the international, regional and local levels, Hong Kong will continue to play a crucial role in providing high value-added professional services to support the green transformation of the global maritime industry. We look forward to collaborating with our Shenzhen counterparts and other stakeholders to continue our efforts towards sustainability together.

23. Last but not least, I wish to take this opportunity to invite all those who are eligible to exercise your right to vote in the upcoming Legislative Council General Election on December 7. Your active participation will be invaluable in contributing to the future of our legal system and the future well-being of our society.

24. On this note, I would like to express my gratitude to SCIA and SCIA(HK) for putting together such a meaningful event, and I wish you all a fruitful and inspiring discussion at today's seminar. I look forward to meeting you again at the Hong Kong Legal Week 2025 next month. Thank you.