

Speech by SJ at virtual signing ceremony of memorandum of understanding on secondment of legal professionals with UNIDROIT (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, today (May 12) at the Virtual Signing Ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) and the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China for the Technical and Administrative Arrangements relating to the Secondment of Legal Professionals:

Professor Tirado (Secretary-General of UNIDROIT, Professor Ignacio Tirado), ladies and gentlemen,

In 2019, I had the honour of speaking in an event where Professor Tirado was the keynote speaker. Not only had I learnt from his insightful comments, I also had the opportunity to meet him and discuss possible collaboration between UNIDROIT and the Department of Justice. One of the areas discussed was a proposal on seconding our legal professionals to UNIDROIT. I am very excited that this proposal is turning into a reality as evidenced in this virtual signing ceremony. The signing of this Memorandum of Understanding signifies an important milestone for the mutual collaboration between UNIDROIT and the Department of Justice, laying a foundation for future development.

Legal professionals have to be equipped with international legal knowledge and have an international perspective. Through participating in the work of UNIDROIT, our young lawyers will gain knowledge of the operation of international organisations, broaden their horizons through learning from international law experts from various jurisdictions and participate in the development of international law.

I am very pleased to announce that the secondment programme to UNIDROIT is open to lawyers in both public and private sectors. As a renowned international organisation located in the Eternal City of Rome, it has the mandate to modernise, harmonise and co-ordinate private and in particular commercial law between states and groups of states. In particular, UNIDROIT formulates uniform law instruments, principles and rules for such purposes in areas like security interests, capital markets, commercial contracts, international sales and civil procedure. The secondment arrangement with UNIDROIT will give our legal professionals a precious opportunity

to keep abreast of the latest global developments in the area of private international law.

Although I am unable to meet Professor Tirado face to face for this signing ceremony due to the ongoing pandemic situation, the staunch support of our technical partner, eBRAM, makes virtual signing of this Memorandum technically possible. We are grateful for eBRAM's continual support to the department's events.

The digital signing of this Memorandum is yet another piece of evidence that displays how lawtech transforms the provision of legal service. This is part of the greater vision that online platforms will play an increasingly significant role in dealmaking and dispute resolution as lawtech enhances efficiency, reduces costs and contributes to carbon reduction and hence the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The interplay between law and technology will become progressively complex in light of the rapid advancements in the cyber world. Indeed, the study of "Digital Assets and Private Law" is one of the major projects of UNIDROIT. In this connection, I should also mention that under the MoU signed with the UNCITRAL (United Nations Commission on International Trade Law), we have established the Department of Justice Project Office for Collaboration with UNCITRAL at the Hong Kong Legal Hub. Further, the Inclusive Global Legal Innovation Platform (iGLIP) comprising experts from around the world has been launched to study various issues relating to law and technology. I am confident that both UNIDROIT and the department's great interest in the interconnection between law and technology will translate into synergy in furtherance of such studies.

The secondment programme is open to applications for one month from May 20 to June 19. Those interested are encouraged to visit the Department of Justice's website for more information. I am sure this valuable opportunity to work on and contribute to private international law projects in UNIDROIT would be very attractive to aspiring young legal professionals in Hong Kong.

Finally, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to UNIDROIT again for their trust and support to the Department of Justice and for making this secondment programme a reality. I look forward to greeting Professor Tirado and all of you in person in Hong Kong very soon. Thank you very much.

Ends/Wednesday, May 12, 2021