

Speech by SJ at Transforming the Legal Profession through Technology - Webinar on the development of Lawtech in Hong Kong over the past 25 years (English only)

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. First of all, let me thank the Law Society of Hong Kong and the eBRAM International Online Dispute Resolution Centre (eBRAM Centre) for co-organizing this webinar on the development of LawTech in Hong Kong. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). I am pleased to note that today's event is the very first accredited event organised by the legal and dispute resolution sector in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Hong Kong SAR.
2. Over the past 25 years, the use of technology has not only facilitated the day to day practice of the legal industry, but also strengthened Hong Kong's position as the leading centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-

Pacific Region. You will hear later from our speakers about the development in the past 25 years but let me just highlight some of the key initiatives on the use of technology by the Department of Justice (DoJ) in recent years.

3. Back in 2017, the DoJ launched Hong Kong e-Legislation (HKeL). It is the official electronic database of Hong Kong, which provides free online access to both the current and past versions of the consolidated legislation in English and Chinese dating back to 30 June 1997. The HKeL, with enhanced searching and display functions, replaced the Bilingual Legal Information System (BLIS) launched in 1997. It will also eventually replace the Loose-leaf Edition to provide verified copies of all consolidated legislation with legal status.¹ To facilitate technology research and innovation, both current and

¹ A verified copy of legislation under the HKeL is presumed, unless the contrary is proved, to correctly state the legislation as at the date specified in the copy (see section 5 of the Legislation Publication Ordinance (Cap. 614))

past legislation data² are available in extensible markup language (XML) format for download through the Public Sector Information (PSI) Portal.

4. More recently, to support the local legal and dispute resolution communities to make better use of technology, we have established the LawTech Fund under the Anti-epidemic Fund in 2020 to assist small and medium-sized law firms and barristers' chambers to keep up with the development in remote hearings through procuring and upgrading their IT systems and arranging their staff to attend LawTech trainings. Over 500 applications were received from over 70% of target firms and chambers.

5. To make full use of the remaining balance of the LawTech Fund, the DoJ will provide a funding support of around \$15.7

² dating back to 30 June 1997

million to subsidize eligible subscribers to subscribe to the “Hong Kong Legal Cloud”, an online facility situated in Hong Kong that is equipped with advanced information security technology to provide safe, secure and affordable data storage services for the local legal and dispute resolution industries. eBRAM Centre has been selected as the service provider of the Hong Kong Legal Cloud services, and you will hear more about its service from the CEO of eBRAM Centre shortly.

6. In addition to the above, in collaboration with international organisations, Hong Kong, China opted into the APEC Collaborative Framework on Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) in April 2020 to promote the use of ODR for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in APEC economies, and DoJ has also launched the Inclusive Global Legal Innovation Platform on ODR (“iGLIP on ODR”) to work with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) to keep track of international

developments of ODR and study various issues on ODR (with the support of the DOJ Project Office for Collaboration with UNCITRAL).

7. Most recently, eBRAM Centre has launched the APEC ODR procedural rules tailor-made for the APEC Collaborative Framework on ODR, which aims to provide a fast and affordable resort to commercial disputes among the APEC economies to MSMEs through the use of electronic communications and other information technology. Last month, eBRAM Centre indicated to the APEC its commitment to become an ODR service provider for APEC economies.
8. Ladies and gentlemen, while we celebrate the Hong Kong SAR's 25th anniversary today, let us appreciate our LawTech achievements so far and its potential beyond. In the meantime, the DoJ will continue to encourage and support the legal profession through different channels to strengthen their

relevant LawTech capabilities as we move towards popularising LawTech in the long run, promoting equal access to justice and achieving the goal of “Justice for All”. Thank you very much.