

Speech by SJ at the Opening Ceremony of 19th Willem C. Vis (East)

International Commercial Arbitration Moot (English only)

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Good evening! Good morning and good afternoon! It is my pleasure to be here for the opening of the 19th Willem C. Vis (East) International Commercial Arbitration Moot (Moot). This Vis East Moot has its roots here in Hong Kong since 2004 and we are ever so grateful to the Vis Moot, in particular Professor Dr. Christopher Kee, Professor Dr. Stefan Kröll and Magister Patrizia Netal for this close collaboration and their support. Due to the pandemic, this is the third time the Virtual Vis East Moot is held in Hong Kong. The challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented, but we continue to organise the Vis East Moot annually for participants around the world, with the aid of LawTech.
2. The Department of Justice (DoJ) has accorded high priority to the development of LawTech in Hong Kong to provide services for the

region and beyond, as well as to prepare our legal and dispute resolution practitioners to meet the future needs of the law firms and their clients.

3. The eBRAM International Online Dispute Resolution Centre (eBRAM) has been providing support for the organisation of the Vis East moot virtually for three consecutive years. Last month, eBRAM has made a submission to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) to become an online dispute resolution (ODR) service provider under the APEC ODR Framework. The ODR platform developed by eBRAM has complied with the requirements under the APEC ODR Framework and its procedural rules, in addition, it is equipped with bank grade security features and artificial intelligence backed translation in five languages (English, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic and Russian). Apart from developing its own ODR platform, eBRAM is also experienced in organising various moot and capacity building activities in this region and beyond since its establishment in 2018. On this note, I am pleased that eBRAM continues to provide technical support for the 3rd virtual Moot this year.

4. Besides the development of infrastructure for ODR in Hong Kong, the DoJ is also actively supporting international development of ODR. Last year, the DoJ held the first part of an ODR Workshop with the support of the ASEAN Secretariat to provide capacity building for traders and practitioners, attracting hundreds of participants from ASEAN countries and beyond; the second part of the ODR Workshop will be held later this year. Furthermore, the DoJ has established the Inclusive Global Legal Innovation Platform (iGLIP), composing of experts across the globe, to facilitate studies on ODR-related issues and explore international developments on ODR in collaboration with UNCITRAL. Experts from the iGLIP will also be presenting the work on a possible international instrument on ODR and Access to Justice at the coming UNCITRAL Colloquium on Possible Future Work on Dispute Resolution on March 29.

5. The DoJ will continue with our fervent efforts to foster the development of LawTech and ODR services with a view to maintaining our position as a centre for international legal and dispute

resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region. In this connection, we will soon welcome the official opening of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre which will also promote the use of ODR as one of its key functions and objectives. This will further enhance Hong Kong as a leading centre for dispute resolution.

6. The Moot this year has attracted around 1,400 participants from 140 teams and over 400 arbitrators, representing 43 jurisdictions. The CISG Conference preceding the opening ceremony has also attracted participants from around the world. The DoJ and indeed the whole legal sector in Hong Kong are committed to supporting the Vis East Moot here and we also look forward to having an unprecedented number of physical participants in Hong Kong next year.

7. Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation to the Vis East Moot Foundation and all volunteers for their dedication and hard work in organising the Moot. I wish the Moot another year of great success, and all participants a most rewarding and enjoyable time. I look forward to welcoming the participants, the coaches, the arbitrators,

Christopher, Stefan and Patrizia all in person and mask free next year
here in Hong Kong. Thank you very much.