

Speech by DSJ at opening ceremony of 21st Willem C. Vis East International Commercial Arbitration Moot (English only) (with photo)

Following are the welcome remarks by the Deputy Secretary for Justice, Mr Cheung Kwok-kwan, at the opening ceremony of 21st Willem C. Vis East International Commercial Arbitration Moot today (March 10):

Ms (Louise) Barrington, Ms (Sherlin) Tung, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the 21st Willem C. Vis (East) International Commercial Arbitration Moot (“Moot”). My heartfelt thanks to the Vis East Moot Foundation for holding the Moot in Hong Kong again.

I am pleased to see that over 650 students and coaches from 149 university teams around the world are participating in this year’s Moot. I also wish to extend a warm welcome to over 300 arbitrators from across the globe who have joined us for this remarkable event.

Over the past two decades, the Moot has earned a reputation as one of the most prestigious international mooting competitions. It serves as a meaningful platform for providing exposure to, and experience in, international arbitration and trade law, while nurturing the advocacy and legal skills of our future talents in an international setting. The DoJ recognizes the significance of this opportunity for youth development and capacity building. We are committed to embracing such opportunities and are honoured to have the Moot hosted in Hong Kong for years to come.

Hong Kong’s position as a leading international financial and

commercial centre is a testament to its rule of law, independent judiciary, and robust legal infrastructure. Our city provides strong legal protection and recognition for cross-border business transactions and investments. These factors have solidified Hong Kong's standing as a major international legal and dispute resolution hub in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Indeed, according to the 2021 International Arbitration Survey conducted by Queen Mary University of London, Hong Kong was ranked as the third most popular seat for arbitration.

What sets Hong Kong apart is its unique status as the only common law jurisdiction within China, through the "One Country Two Systems" principle. Our law is enacted bilingually in both Chinese and English. The Hong Kong and the Mainland Governments have implemented various arrangements to position Hong Kong as a distinctive dispute resolution centre, offering benefits to parties which are simply not available if they were to arbitrate elsewhere. For example, the Arrangement Concerning Mutual Assistance in Court-ordered Interim Measures in Aid of Arbitral Proceedings by the Courts of the Mainland and of the HKSAR (Interim Measures Arrangement) allows parties who choose Hong Kong as the arbitral seat to apply to the Mainland and Hong Kong courts for interim relief, including preservation of asset, conduct and evidence. As of January 2024, Hong Kong's arbitral institutions have processed 109 applications for interim measures made to the Mainland courts, resulting in court orders for the preservation of over RMB16.3 billion worth of assets. Additionally, there are mechanisms in place for the mutual enforcement of arbitral awards and judgments in civil or commercial matters, as well as a pilot scheme for mutual recognition and assistance in insolvency proceedings between Hong Kong and the Mainland. Furthermore, Hong Kong lawyers have the opportunity to qualify as Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) lawyers, enabling them to provide integrated legal services to investors for cross-border and Mainland-related commercial contracts. All these features render Hong

Kong an unrivalled international gateway to Mainland China.

The DoJ will continue to pursue innovative initiatives with the aim of strengthening Hong Kong's status as an international hub for deal-making, legal, and dispute resolution services.

On this note, I am confident that our friends here are eagerly anticipating the 26th International Council for Commercial Arbitration Congress (ICCA Congress), which will also take place in Hong Kong from May 5 to 8 this year. It is the largest biennial arbitration conference worldwide, gathering dispute resolution specialists to discuss important issues and developments in international arbitration. I look forward to welcoming you all in Hong Kong in May joining us in this meaningful event.

On this joyous occasion of the Opening Ceremony of the Moot, I wish you all a rewarding mooting experience and a very fruitful stay in Hong Kong. I also wish the Moot another year of great success. Thank you!