

Closing remarks by SJ at 11th Asia and Pacific Regional Conference of the International Association of Prosecutors (English only) (with photo)

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Following are the closing remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the 11th Asia and Pacific Regional Conference of the International Association of Prosecutors (IAP) today (November 29):

Dear friends of IAP, delegates, distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to speak to all of you again at this closing session of the 11th Asia and Pacific Regional conference of the IAP. I trust that we have all had a long day today and also yesterday engaging in fruitful discussions and exchanges.

To mark the conclusion of the professional programme of our conference, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude for your participation and contribution over the past two days. My deepest gratitude must also go to the IAP for hosting this year's regional conference in Hong Kong. It is certainly an honour for Hong Kong to be organising the conference this year, 20 years after we last did the same in 2004. I sincerely hope that we have not failed your expectations on us. And of course, I must thank each and every member of the delegation from the Supreme People's Procuratorate of PRC led by the First Deputy Prosecutor General Tong Jianming, whose presence demonstrates the strong support of the Central People's Government in Hong Kong.

My dear friends, your valuable insights and sharing of experiences and best practices will no doubt pave the way for future efforts for further improving the already high standards of criminal justice in each of the jurisdictions we represent, in particular, in the area of combating technology crimes. This is indeed the main intent and purpose of this conference. However, this is not the only purpose. In my view, an equally important, if not more important, purpose is that it gives us the chance to see and speak to one another face to face. Apart from attending the professional and social programmes of the conference, I understand that many side meetings have been arranged between the delegates from different jurisdictions. For example, my colleagues and I had a very fruitful meeting with the delegation of Vietnam led by the Deputy Prosecutor General on Wednesday.

I always believe that, in order that international co-operation can be truly effective having regard to the fact that we come from very different backgrounds and legal systems, it is essential to build rapport, and to develop a relationship of mutual trust and confidence, among prosecutors around the world at a personal level. And this requires us to see and speak to one another as often as possible in the hope that we can call each other true friends.

It is also necessary to remember that, no matter how constructive this conference is, it is unrealistic and virtually impossible to canvass all relevant issues in depth. To put the matter in context, this conference should be regarded as a major step in a continuous process to foster international co-operation to tackle technology crimes via the platform of IAP. I am therefore very interested in learning various latest developments and future plans of IAP mentioned at the opening ceremony of the conference.

In this respect, I wish to reiterate that the Department of Justice of Hong Kong is fully committed to strengthening international co-operation in the fight against crimes, and in particular, by participating more proactively in the work of IAP in future. Apart from taking part and hosting conferences whenever opportunities arise, there is one area that I wish to highlight. As I understand, one of the important objectives of IAP is capacity building via the Global Training Academy which, among other things, holds webinars on various topics from time to time. The Department of Justice of Hong Kong has just established the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy (HKILTTA) a few weeks ago in early November. The HKILTTA aims at organising and co-ordinating capacity building programmes concerning different areas of the law, in particular, those of international interests, not only for legal professionals in Hong Kong, but more importantly, those from other parts of China and the rest of the world. I can see that there is huge potential for collaboration between the Global Training Academy of IAP and the HKILTTA.

I said at the welcome dinner that I hope that, by the end of the conference, you will be convinced that Hong Kong has remained to be a lively and vibrant international city where the East and the West meet. I have to confess that I am in fact more ambitious. I also hope that, when you leave Hong Kong, you will also be convinced that Hong Kong has remained to be a place which enjoys a higher degree of the rule of law based on our common law system under the principle of "one country, two systems", and that our determination to maintain and enhance the rule of law is stronger than ever.

In the 2024 World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, Hong Kong ranks the 6th in East Asia and the Pacific, and the 23rd out of 142 countries and jurisdictions globally. It is most noteworthy that Hong Kong ranks the 10th worldwide in the factor of "absence of corruption", and the 9th in the factor of "order and security". These remarkable achievements reflecting both perception and reality are clearly attributable to the existence of fair and effective prosecution services in Hong Kong. And I wish to take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues in the Prosecutions Division for their dedication and hard work, including in the organisation of this conference.

Although the professional programmes have come to an end, this is not yet the conclusion of the conference. I am sure that you are all now looking forward to the cultural visit to the Hong Kong Palace Museum this afternoon after lunch, and to get to know more about Hong Kong and the Chinese culture. This will be followed by a farewell reception at Sky 100 on the 100th floor in the International Commerce Centre, which is the tallest building in Hong Kong. We have chosen that particular place in order to make the point that this conference signifies that international co-operation under IAP has reached a new height. And to those of you who will have to go home and are unable to join the remaining social programmes, I wish you all safe travels back home.

On this note, I very much look forward to seeing and speaking to you again soon either in Hong Kong or elsewhere. Thank you very much.

Ends/Friday, November 29, 2024