

Speech by DSJ at Global Legal Meet to commemorate the 35th Anniversary of the Hong Kong Basic Law (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Deputy Secretary for Justice, Dr Cheung Kwok-kwan, at the Global Legal Meet to commemorate the 35th Anniversary of the Hong Kong Basic Law today (October 20):

Professor Wang Guiguo (President of International Academy of the Belt and Road), Mr Liu Chunhua (the Director-General of the Department of Law of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is a great pleasure to join you all today at this conference commemorating the 35th anniversary of the "one country, two systems". Over the past three and a half decades, this constitutional innovation has not only ensured the sustained prosperity and stability of Hong Kong but has also demonstrated China's wisdom and resolve in advancing the course of national rejuvenation.

Hong Kong is the only common law jurisdiction in China, making it a vital bridge for international community. Hong Kong is the only bilingual common law system in the world, operating in both Chinese and English, offering global firms and investors unparalleled convenience, credibility, and predictability. Our legal system has operated robustly for over 180 years, constitutionally enshrined in the Basic Law after 1997. That by constitutional guarantee, we have been enjoying judicial independence, including the power of final adjudication vested solely in Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal, a fact that continues to build confidence at home

and abroad. This trust is the evidence in our global standing: Hong Kong consistently ranks among the top jurisdictions globally for business legislation and arbitration, making us the world's second most preferred seat for arbitration and number one in the Asia-Pacific region.

With a legal system aligned with major economies and a highly skilled international legal community, Hong Kong continues strengthening its legal interface with the Chinese Mainland. For instance, Hong Kong arbitral parties enjoy access to Mainland courts to seek interim protective measures, a privilege not available in other common law jurisdictions. Furthermore, the mechanism for reciprocal enforcement of judgments between Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland exemplifies an effective cross-boundary legal co-operation, enhancing legal certainty for businesses.

Against this backdrop, we gather to reaffirm our shared commitment to "one country, two systems" and explore new opportunities within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), a region of extraordinary potential and strategic importance.

With a GDP surpassing US\$1.92 trillion by 2023, the GBA now rivals and in some cases, surpasses world renowned bay areas like New York, San Francisco, and Tokyo. This dynamic region demonstrates its successful implementation of "one country, two systems". Within the GBA, we witness the coexistence and complementarity of three distinct legal systems: the civil law system with Chinese Mainland characteristics, Hong Kong's common law system, and Macao's legal framework with European roots.

The synergy of the three systems depends on one crucial element: talent. Here, the growing team of "GBA lawyers", who are qualified to practice across jurisdictions, is pivotal in fostering professional cross-fertilisation. These legal practitioners serve as vital connectors between Mainland and international legal practices, enabling businesses to confidently navigate an evolving, complex regulatory landscape within and beyond the GBA.

The strategic value of the GBA is also reflected in concrete policy innovations. For example, foreign investors establishing companies in Hong Kong and expanding into GBA cities such as Shenzhen can benefit from preferential policies. They may choose Hong Kong law to govern their contracts and select Hong Kong as the seat of arbitration, effectively leveraging our most credible legal system to manage cross-border risks and engage with the Mainland market with greater confidence.

Of course, realising the full potential of the GBA requires further concerted efforts to strengthen institutional, regulatory, and talent connectivity across the region. This is a shared journey, and I sincerely thank all of our partners from Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland, who have contributed to this endeavor over the past decades.

As we embark on today's conference, I wish you fruitful discussions on various forward-looking topics from AI commercialisation, strategic philanthropy to regional conflict resolution experience, and the inspiring stories of Chinese enterprises expanding globally through Hong Kong. These themes will undoubtedly shape the next chapter in the development of the GBA and beyond and most worthy of our thoughtful deliberation.

On this note, may I thank the organiser again and wish our guests from abroad a wonderful time in Hong Kong. Thank you very much.