

Speech by DSJ at International Conference of Legal Regulators 2025 (English only)
(with photo)

Following is the speech by the Deputy Secretary for Justice, Dr Cheung Kwok-kwan,
at the International Conference of Legal Regulators 2025 today (October 21):

President Tong (President of The Law Society of Hong Kong, Mr Roden Tong), Dr
Kelvin Wong (Chairman of the Securities and Futures Commission of Hong Kong),
distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is my pleasure to join you all at the International Conference of
Legal Regulators today. My warmest welcome to the leaders and representatives from
across the global legal regulatory community. I am particularly delighted that Hong Kong
has been chosen as the venue for hosting the conference this year. Your presence here
reflects our shared commitment to upholding the highest standards of the legal
profession.

The theme of this year's Conference, "New Ways to Regulate in a Changing World?",
is not only timely but profoundly critical. We are navigating an era of unprecedented and
simultaneous transformation. Breakthroughs in technology and global economic shifts
present both opportunities and challenges for legal regulators worldwide. Our discussions
over the coming days will focus on fostering a resilient and adaptive regulatory
environment, which is essential for upholding the rule of law.

In Hong Kong, our approach to these global challenges is firmly anchored in our
constitutional principle of "one country, two systems". This principle, enshrined in our
Basic Law, is the bedrock of our success and stability. It is the foundation that underpins
our common law system, which continues to operate robustly.

Central to this system is the independent exercise of legal and regulatory powers. Our
Judiciary exercises independent judicial power free from any interference. Similarly, the
regulation of legal practitioners is handled independently by the legal profession itself.
The Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association, as the self-
regulatory bodies for their respective professions, perform this critical function with the
highest degree of professionalism, integrity, and diligence. Their work in upholding

stringent ethical standards, ensuring professional competence, and administering a fair disciplinary system is conducted strictly in accordance with the law, free from interference. This independent self-regulation is a cornerstone of our legal framework and a key reason for the immense international confidence placed in Hong Kong's status as a leading international legal and dispute resolution hub.

While our foundations are strong, we are facing several new challenges.

First, technological disruption, particularly the development of artificial intelligence (AI), is fundamentally reshaping the practice of law. These tools offer potential to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and improve access to justice. However, they also pose regulatory questions on accountability, confidentiality of clients, and ethical practice.

At present, the laws in Hong Kong protect the legitimate rights and interests of individuals, enterprises and various other organisations in different spheres. To manage potential risks in promoting the ongoing technological development, the Department of Justice will establish an interdepartmental working group to review the legislation needed to support a wider application of AI. This initiative is part of our broader strategy to encourage AI applications across different sectors, while ensuring that regulatory frameworks keep pace with technological advancements.

Second, the expansion of cross-border trade amplifies the need for mediation and arbitration, which in turn necessitates a stronger regulatory framework for such services. The Department of Justice established the Working Group on Mediation Regulatory System in October last year to review the regulatory system for the accreditation and disciplinary matters of the mediation profession in Hong Kong, and to make recommendations on enhancing the professionalism of mediators. We will implement measures for strengthening the system for the mediation profession in Hong Kong by the end of this year, as well as take forward the relevant legislative work next year. These efforts aim at ensuring our regulatory frameworks remain fit for purpose in a globalised and increasingly mediated legal environment.

Third, the increasing cross-border nature of legal practice challenges our traditionally jurisdiction-specific regulatory models. This requires the enhancement of cross-border co-operation. Exchange of insights, sharing of best practices, and building mutual understanding through collaboration is necessary.

Hong Kong is proud to contribute to this vital global conversation. Our unique position as a gateway between the East and the West, along with our professional legal sector and robust common law system, make us a "super connector" in the field of legal regulation.

Through this conference, we can pioneer the new regulatory pathways. I have every expectation that your deliberations over the next two days will be immensely stimulating, pioneering, and productive.

I thank The Law Society of Hong Kong once again for its sterling efforts in hosting this pivotal event. To our distinguished international guests, I wish you a successful conference and a delightful stay in Hong Kong. Thank you very much.

Ends/Tuesday, October 21, 2025

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