

Speech by SJ at first session of 2025 APEC Structural Reform Ministerial Meeting in Incheon (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at "Session 1: How Structural Reform can contribute to Building a Sustainable Tomorrow: Connect, Innovate, Prosper" of the 2025 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Structural Reform Ministerial Meeting in Incheon, Korea, today (October 22):

Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, fellow ministers.

As you may know, Hong Kong, China, as guaranteed by our Basic Law, is a free port with no tariffs or other non-tariff trade barriers; we safeguard free flow of capital and goods; we adopt a low tax policy; we practise a bilingual common law system with a judiciary enjoying the power of independent adjudication including that of final adjudication. These features, considered as a whole, enable Hong Kong, China to offer an open, fair and transparent business and investment environment. That said, we will spare no effort to continue to consider and implement structural reforms, which are deemed necessary.

I shall focus on the three keywords of this session, namely, connect, innovate and prosper. Our journey towards sustained prosperity in the long run calls for "enhancing connectivity" and "fostering innovation".

Enhancing connectivity is crucial, especially amidst geopolitical challenges. Hong Kong, China stands firm in supporting a rule-based international economic order. We have assisted in the establishment of the International Organization for Mediation, which was formally opened two days ago with its headquarters located in Hong Kong, China. We are eager to build stronger ties with other economies and organisations. For example, we are working closely with key international organisations like the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) and the Hague Conference on Private International Law. This December, we will host the UNCITRAL Judicial Summit during Hong Kong Legal Week 2025 to discuss legal issues concerning digitalisation. We are also seeking to establish a regional liaison office of UNIDROIT in Hong Kong, China.

Turning to innovation, Hong Kong, China is committed to fostering an innovative landscape that promotes the use of modern technology on the one hand while ensuring that it will not be misused or abused on the other hand. For example, we will introduce a new law next year for digitalisation of trade documents based on the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records; and we will study how to establish a legal regime that will support and regulate the wider application of artificial intelligence in different areas.

Ladies and gentlemen, the pathway to a sustainable tomorrow lies in connectivity and innovation - which has also been emphasised in the Strengthened and Enhanced APEC

Agenda for Structural Reform for our next phase of structural reform. Together, let us connect, innovate and prosper, with a view to transforming challenges into opportunities for APEC and beyond. Thank you.

Ends/Wednesday, October 22, 2025