

Speech by SJ at third session of 2025 APEC Structural Reform Ministerial Meeting in Incheon, Korea (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at "Session 3: Structural Reform to Promote Prosperity for All" of the 2025 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Structural Reform Ministerial Meeting in Incheon, Korea, today (October 23):

Thank you, Chair. Good morning, fellow ministers.

We gather today to discuss a vision that transcends mere prosperity, but prosperity for all. A fair and just society is not measured solely by the achievements of the fortunate, but more importantly by how we uplift the less privileged and those in need.

In Hong Kong, China our commitment is to ensure that the fruits of our prosperity are shared equitably among all people. This is emphasised in the theme of the Policy Address by our Chief Executive this year namely "Deepening Reforms for Our People and Leveraging Our Strengths for a Brighter Future".

I would like to highlight three pivotal areas of structural reform being undertaken in Hong Kong, China that are essential to promoting prosperity for everyone, namely housing, employees' rights, and healthcare.

On housing, every individual deserves a safe and dignified place to call home, and the living conditions of those living in inadequate housing shall be improved as soon as possible. That is why we have recently passed the law on Basic Housing Units to eliminate substandard and cramped subdivided units. We have also introduced Light Public Housing units using a standardised simple design and the Modular Integrated Construction approach to build such units expeditiously to fill the short-term gap of the public housing supply.

For employees, starting from May 1, 2026, we will review the statutory minimum wage annually instead of once every two years to ensure that it will follow more closely any change in the economy in order to provide sufficient safeguards to employees. We have updated our Employment Ordinance recently to widen the definition of employees to ensure that more people, who have flexible working hours, would enjoy the comprehensive employment rights which they deserve.

Meanwhile, healthcare is another top priority to Hong Kong, China. It has one of the longest living expectancies in the world. To affirm our commitment in this respect, we will enhance primary healthcare services by introducing legislation that empowers our relevant authority to ensure universal access to medical care, regardless of individual circumstances.

Furthermore, we recognise that micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs)

should be empowered to participate in and benefit from economic development. Many MSMEs encounter hurdles in accessing justice in cross-border trade disputes. To address this issue, Hong Kong, China has collaborated with other APEC economies to establish the APEC Collaborative Framework for Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) of Cross-Border Business-to-Business Disputes. This Framework provides a quick and affordable dispute resolution mechanism, thereby enhancing access to justice for MSMEs. It also supports new initiatives under the Strengthened and Enhanced APEC Agenda for Structural Reform. Hong Kong, China is proud to have opted into the Framework; and that one ODR provider under the Framework comes from Hong Kong, China.

As we continue on our journey for structural reforms, our goal is not just economic growth, but also building a society that champions fairness and equity.

Together, let us commit to a more inclusive future - one where prosperity is indeed for all. Before I conclude, I would like to express our gratitude and congratulations on behalf of the Hong Kong, China delegation to Korea for holding such a meaningful and fruitful meeting. Thank you.

Ends/Thursday, October 23, 2025