

Speech by SJ at 6th UNCITRAL Asia Pacific Judicial Summit 2025 - Judicial
Conference (English only) (with photo/video)

Following are the welcome remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the 6th UNCITRAL Asia Pacific Judicial Summit 2025 - Judicial Conference under Hong Kong Legal Week 2025 today (December 1):

The Honourable Chief Justice Mr Andrew Cheung (Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal), Ms Anna Joubin-Bret (Secretary of United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)), Professor Teresa Cheng (Secretary-General of International Organization for Mediation), Mr Tian Ya (Deputy Director-General of the Department of Treaty and Law of the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China), your excellencies, Consuls General, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

As we gather today for the 6th UNCITRAL Asia Pacific Judicial Summit, we also kick-start the Hong Kong Legal Week 2025.

The Hong Kong Legal Week is an annual major event of the Department of Justice which serves as a dynamic platform for the legal and dispute resolution sector, legal scholars, judges and experts to discuss key topical legal issues in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

Under the theme of "Linking Laws, Bridging Worlds", Hong Kong Legal Week 2025 aims at highlighting Hong Kong's role in connecting different economies and legal systems through collaboration, understanding and global legal exchange. Under the fundamental principle of "one country, two systems", Hong Kong is the only common law jurisdiction in China. With our strong legal foundation and international connectivity, Hong Kong is dedicated to serve as a super connector and capacity building hub, in order to facilitate the legal and economic collaboration across the region and beyond.

The 6th UNCITRAL Asia Pacific Judicial Summit is co-organised by UNCITRAL and the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy of the Department of Justice, under the theme "The Future is Now: Legally Enabling Digitalization of International Trade". Today, we have more than 50 judges from over 25 jurisdictions attending in person, with numerous other jurisdictions joining virtually, including those

from ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), Central Asia, and Pacific Islands, reflecting the global reach and importance of the Summit. To facilitate the participation of Russian-speaking judges from Central Asia, we are grateful for the support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) of providing simultaneous interpretation from English into Russian.

In fact, it is not the first time we work with the ADB and UNCITRAL on capacity building. This Judicial Summit actually marks the third event that we have co-organised with UNCITRAL this year. Since the Department of Justice launched the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy during the Hong Kong Legal Week last year, the Academy and UNCITRAL have co-organised capacity building programmes including the Conference on Climate Change and International Trade Law this March in Hong Kong and the Workshop on Use of International Instruments to Legally Enable End-to-End Digitalization of Trade under the Economic Committee of APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) in Incheon, Korea, in August this year. These collaborations have not only contributed to capacity building for stakeholders in the region but also the further development of international trade law.

In addition to co-organising events with UNCITRAL, we worked with UNCITRAL to set up the Inclusive Global Legal Innovation Platform on Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) which will hold its fifth expert meeting tomorrow to discuss international development and potential issues relating to ODR. Besides, we are delighted to see UNCITRAL's strong support for the secondment programme with the Department of Justice, which enables Hong Kong legal practitioners to actively take part in UNCITRAL's work and enhance their knowledge of international legal matters, thereby contributing to the capacity building of our local legal practitioners as well. I note that a number of our colleagues who have been seconded to the UNCITRAL Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific are also with us today.

Apart from the objective of capacity building, the Judicial Conference which will centre on the theme "Building Towards End-to-End Trade Digitalization" provides a platform to share experience and exchange views on critical issues in facilitating digitalisation of the entire trade process, digitalisation of trade finance and digital assets, paperless trade systems, digital transformation in transport, as well as emerging trends in dispute resolution within the rapidly evolving digital economy, with reference to the application of UNCITRAL texts.

In fact, UNCITRAL texts have been proven to be very useful tool for creating a harmonised and enabling legal environment. We have applied and implemented quite a number of UNCITRAL texts, ranging from conventions to model rule in various areas. Very soon, as announced in the Chief Executive's Hong Kong Policy Address this year, Hong Kong would introduce legislative amendments in 2026 for digitalisation of business-to-business trade documents with reference to the Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records adopted by UNCITRAL.

Complementing the Judicial Conference today, the Judicial Roundtable to be held tomorrow will explore "Recent Trends in Dispute Resolution", in order to facilitate interactive and in-depth dialogues among judges and judicial officers in the region on innovative judicial approaches for handling disputes involving artificial intelligence, as well as the dynamic interaction between alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and formal court proceedings. Let us seize the opportunity to actively engage in the exchanges, whether in person or online.

Before I conclude, may I express my appreciation to UNCITRAL again for their partnership, the Asian Development Bank for their support, and my heartfelt gratitude to all moderators and speakers, some of them have come from afar, as well as the Secretary General of the International Organization for Mediation and our Chief Justice who will give special remarks and a keynote speech in a moment. On this note, I announce the official opening of the Hong Kong Legal Week 2025. Thank you.

Ends/Monday, December 1, 2025