

Speech by SJ at Symposium of HCCH Regional Office for Asia and Pacific on Private International Law (English only) (with photo/video)  
\*\*\*\*\*

Following are the welcome remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the Symposium of the HCCH Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) on Private International Law under Hong Kong Legal Week 2025 today (December 3):

Dr Christophe Bernasconi (Secretary-General of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH)), Consuls-General, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to join you all today at the Symposium of the HCCH Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific on Private International Law, co-organised by the Hague Conference on Private International Law and the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy of my department, as part of the Hong Kong Legal Week 2025.

In fact, this is the very first time that we co-organised an event with the HCCH during Hong Kong Legal Week. The HCCH is our long-standing partner and we have worked very closely with the HCCH for decades. With the staunch support of the Central People's Government, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has been actively participating in the working groups, meetings and activities of the HCCH as part of the Chinese delegation since 1997. Through a standing arrangement with the HCCH, Hong Kong legal talent from both the private and public sectors have the opportunity to be seconded to the Permanent Bureau of the HCCH at the Hague, obtaining valuable insights into the work of the HCCH in the field of private international law.

In 2012, the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific of the HCCH was set up in the HKSAR. Since its establishment, ROAP has played a significant role in increasing awareness and understanding of the importance of the HCCH and its instruments among states and stakeholders, as well as contributing to the smooth implementation and operation of the HCCH's instruments in the Asia-Pacific region.

Today's Symposium is another example of our long-standing collaborations with the HCCH. We are joined here today by esteemed speakers from different parts of the Asia-Pacific region, who will share their insightful views on topics relevant to the theme of today's Symposium - "Transnational Litigation & Apostille: Innovating Practices under the HCCH Conventions".

Hong Kong has long valued the work of the HCCH; a total of nine HCCH instruments are currently applicable to the HKSAR, including the Apostille, Service and Evidence Conventions, which will be discussed in today's Symposium. Back in 1965, the first HCCH Convention which applied to Hong Kong was the Apostille Convention, which is now one of the most widely applied multilateral treaties in the area of legal co-operation with over 125 contracting parties, followed by the Service Convention in 1970 and the Evidence Convention in 1978. Under the principle of "one country, two systems", these

HCCH Conventions continue to apply to the HKSAR since 1997.

As the timing would suggest, these HCCH Conventions were concluded at a time which is vastly different from today. To adapt to the rapid and ever-evolving technological advancements over the years, the HCCH has developed various innovating practices to facilitate and streamline the functioning of the HCCH's Conventions in this digital age.

These innovating practices include the electronic Apostille Programme (e-APP), which is aimed at supporting the electronic issuance and verification of Apostilles around the world. The HKSAR has also implemented the e-APP in recent years, which will be discussed by Registrar Kwang from the High Court of the HKSAR (Registrar of the High Court, Mr Simon Kwang) during the first panel discussion later today. With respect to the use of digital means under other HCCH Conventions, taking of evidence by video link has been implemented in the HKSAR for some years. In fact, video-conferencing facilities have been used for remote hearings for suitable civil cases of the High Court since April 3, 2020. I will leave further discussion to our experts at the second panel who will share their insights on how digital means could further enhance efficiency in litigation support under various HCCH Conventions.

Ladies and gentlemen, today's theme is timely as we explore how innovating practices, including digital means, can streamline cross-border document circulation and enhance efficiency in litigation support in the context of the HCCH's Conventions. I hope today's Symposium will allow us all to engage in meaningful exchanges and drive forward the future of private international law. Thank you.

Ends/Wednesday, December 3, 2025