

Speech by SJ at virtual signing ceremony of Memorandum of Administrative Arrangements Concerning Establishment of UNIDROIT Liaison Office for Asia-Pacific Region in HKSAR (English only) (with photo)

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Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the virtual signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Administrative Arrangements (MAA) Concerning the Establishment of the UNIDROIT Liaison Office for the Asia-Pacific Region in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China today (March 12):

Professor Tirado (Secretary-General of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT), Professor Ignacio Tirado), ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to participate in today's virtual signing ceremony of the MAA between UNIDROIT and the Department of Justice (DoJ) of the Government of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China.

The conclusion of the MAA would not have been possible without the staunch and unwavering support of the Central People's Government, for which I am most sincerely grateful. This milestone builds upon the Memorandum of Understanding concluded in May 2022, which laid the groundwork for enhanced collaboration between UNIDROIT and the DoJ. Our shared vision has always been to promote the modernisation and harmonisation of law across the Asia-Pacific region through high-level capacity building and joint initiatives. This collaboration is also seen through the secondment programme of legal professionals with UNIDROIT, based upon our Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2021, whereby legal professionals from both our public and private sectors are seconded to UNIDROIT, where they have gained invaluable experience and could contribute directly to UNIDROIT's projects.

After a few years' discussion with the secretariat of UNIDROIT, the UNIDROIT Governing Council recommended establishment of a UNIDROIT Liaison Office for the Asia-Pacific region in the HKSAR. The recommendation was approved at the 85th Session of the UNIDROIT General Assembly in December 2025. The MAA we sign today completes the next important step for this Liaison Office, and together, we look forward to the opening ceremony set for November this year, together with the Asia-Pacific International Private Law Summit and the Centenary Regional Event during the Hong Kong Legal Week 2026. This will be a double celebration, marking both the Liaison Office's inauguration and UNIDROIT's centenary. The opening of the Liaison Office will mark the first overseas presence of UNIDROIT in its 100 years' history and will indeed be the highlight of UNIDROIT's centenary. For the past century, UNIDROIT has been at the forefront of legal harmonisation, and the establishment of the UNIDROIT Liaison Office in the HKSAR serves as a profound testament to the Institute's expanded presence in the Asia-Pacific region. This milestone not only honours the remarkable success of UNIDROIT's operations over the past century but also heralds the start of an exciting new chapter of global influence, in which the HKSAR is proud to play a pivotal

role.

I am confident that the establishment of the Liaison Office will further strengthen the already very strong collaborative relationship between the DoJ and UNIDROIT while fostering a deeper understanding and implementation of private law and in particular commercial law throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Indeed, the establishment of this Liaison Office represents a significant visionary step. As a central pillar of global economic activity, the Asia-Pacific region accounts for more than one-third of the world's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and encompasses vital trade corridors that have for centuries facilitated intercontinental commerce and cultural exchange. Opening UNIDROIT's first liaison office in this dynamic region is a forward-looking step that recognises the evolving landscape of international commerce.

It is no coincidence that the HKSAR stands as an ideal home for UNIDROIT's first regional presence. As a leading international legal and dispute resolution hub, our city is underpinned by a robust and familiar common law system, an independent judiciary, and a world-class legal infrastructure. Our unique position as the only common law jurisdiction within China under the "one country, two systems" principle allows us to serve as a vital bridge, facilitating the convergence of diverse legal traditions, and advancing an inclusive dialogue that reflects the diverse legal and economic perspectives of the Asia-Pacific within the global legal landscape. By leveraging our professional expertise and deep-rooted rule of law, the Liaison Office is perfectly positioned to promote the global reach of unified legal standards from a stable and highly sophisticated platform.

Finally, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the Secretary-General for his enduring trust and support. With the signing of the MAA today, we move one step closer to the launching of UNIDROIT's first Liaison Office in the HKSAR. I look forward to welcoming you in person to the HKSAR for the opening of the Liaison Office very soon. Thank you very much.

Ends/Thursday, March 12, 2026