Speech by SJ at opening ceremony of Training Course on International Trade and International Investment Legal Practice (English only) (with photo)
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Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the opening ceremony of the Training Course on International Trade and International Investment Legal Practice today (September 7):

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the Training Course on International Trade and International Investment Legal Practice, co-organised by the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China and the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy of the Department of Justice of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. First, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to each of you for travelling to Hong Kong to participate in this course.

Today marks a particularly meaningful occasion for the Academy. This training course offers not only a valuable opportunity to deepen professional knowledge in international trade and investment, but also represents the first collaboration between the Ministry of Commerce and the Academy. Since its launch in November 2024, the Academy has collaborated with over 20 international organisations, central authorities and professional bodies, in delivering capacity-building training programmes in Hong Kong and beyond for over 2 000 participants. Today, we are very honoured to embark on the official partnership with the Ministry of Commerce. I would like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt appreciation for the Ministry's strong support for this inaugural collaboration, and for the confidence it has placed in the Academy.

Nowadays, international trade and investments, as well as economic activities, in general are increasingly intertwined with geopolitical considerations, rapid technological changes, and evolving regional or international frameworks, apart from the traditional trade practice and commercial consideration. A solid and up-to-date understanding of the relevant international development is more important than ever. Trade officials therefore not only need to have a sound understanding of trade agreements, investment rules, and the relevant work of multilateral institutions, but also need the ability to assess how broader political, technological and economic developments may have favourable or adverse influences on their national interests, businesses and investment. To respond to such needs, this course aims to strengthen participants' capability in tackling emerging risks and challenges, acquaint with fast-moving policies and market developments, engage in exchanges with international counterparts, and develop informed responses that safeguard the interests of economies and seize the available opportunities in an increasingly complex global landscape.

Hong Kong is best placed to offer such valuable perspectives. As an international financial, trading and professional services centre, Hong Kong has long maintained close trade and export ties with the Chinese Mainland and the international communities. For instance, the Chinese Mainland accounted for 51.4 per cent of Hong Kong's merchandise trade in 2025. In addition, the value of goods re-exported through Hong Kong from and to the Chinese Mainland exceeded HK$4.2 trillion, accounting for more than 80 per cent of Hong Kong's total re-export trade value. Further, Hong Kong is the largest source of overseas direct investment for the Chinese Mainland, and is the Chinese Mainland's second largest trading partner. Alongside the Second Agreement Concerning Amendment to CEPA (Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement) Agreement on Trade in Services, which took effect in 2025, the cross-border transactions between Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland are expected to become increasingly extensive and interconnected. Beyond the Chinese Mainland, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is also a key economic and trading partner of Hong Kong. ASEAN was Hong Kong's second-largest trading partner in merchandise trade in 2025 and the third largest in services trade in 2024. Total merchandise trade between Hong Kong and ASEAN amounted to HK$1,668.5 billion in 2025 and total services trade between the two sides was HK$158.3 billion in 2024.

Hong Kong's strategic role is underpinned by its strong rule of law tradition with a sophisticated common law system, free flow of capital, simple and low tax regime, and a large pool of international talents under the principle of "one country, two systems". We provide businesses and investors with a trusted and efficient platform for cross-border trade, investment, financing and professional services, especially with extensive connectivity with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and as a gateway for enterprises seeking opportunities in both the Chinese Mainland and international markets, particularly in the Belt and Road regions.

We hope that this course will not only provide an opportunity for the speakers and participants to freely exchange views and practical experience, but also better equip participants to respond to contemporary challenges for sustainable trade and investment.

A training programme is enriched not only by the calibre of its participants, but also by the expertise of those who lead the discussions. We are privileged to be joined by a group of distinguished speakers. They include distinguished academics, most notably Professor Zheng Yongnian, Dean of the School of Public Policy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, to whom I extend my special thanks. They also include seasoned practitioners from law firms, accounting firms and advisory firms, as well as representatives of my department and arbitration institutions. And moreover, we are privileged to have with us the Deputy Secretary-General of the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, senior officials from our Trade and Industry Department and the Financial Services Development Council. Together, our speakers bring an exceptional breadth of experience across academia, private practice, government and international institutions.

Over the coming days, we will explore a wide range of timely and intricate issues, including the evolving geopolitical landscape of international trade, export controls and sanctions regimes, emerging trade policy instruments, dispute resolution, relevant technological developments, as well as the legal issues arising from Chinese enterprises going global.

This course extends far beyond the four walls of this room. Over the course of the training programme, you will have the opportunity to see Hong Kong's legal and dispute resolution ecosystem up close through visits to the High Court, the Hong Kong Legal Hub, the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre and the International Organization for Mediation. Another special feature of this course is that you will attend the Belt and Road Summit, which brings together senior government officials and business leaders from countries and regions along and beyond the Belt and Road to exchange insights on multilateral co-operation, and explore concrete business opportunities. We have also arranged cultural and exchange activities to give you a fuller sense of this city.

Beyond the training course itself, I hope you will have an opportunity to experience Hong Kong firsthand, and to discover the many dimensions that make this city unique. While Hong Kong is widely recognised as an international financial, trade and legal services centre, it is also a city of remarkable energy, cultural diversity and natural beauty. As the saying goes, "seeing is believing". I invite you to experience Hong Kong for yourselves and discover its distinctive character in your own way.

Ladies and gentlemen, we hope this course will provide a valuable platform for meaningful dialogue, practical knowledge-sharing and the forging of lasting professional connections. We also look forward to the perspectives, experiences and insights that you will bring to the course. We have a full week ahead, but experience tells us that it will pass quickly without you noticing. I therefore encourage you to make the most of every session and every opportunity to engage with the speakers and one another.

With that, I wish this course every success, and each of you a rewarding, productive and enjoyable stay in Hong Kong. Thank you very much.

Ends/Monday, September 7, 2026