

Closing remarks by DSJ at Family Office Mediation and Collaborative Practice Training
(English only) (with photo)

Following are the closing remarks by the Deputy Secretary for Justice, Dr Cheung Kwok-kwan, at the Family Office Mediation and Collaborative Practice Training today (September 29):

Nick (Director of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre, Professor Nick Chan), Ms Cooley (Chief Executive Officer of Cooley Family Office, Ms Ann Cooley), Jason (Global Head of Family Office at Invest Hong Kong, Mr Jason Fong), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is my honour today to speak at the closing session of the inaugural Family Office Mediation and Collaborative Practice Training in this historic venue.

On behalf of the Department of Justice (DoJ), I wish to first extend my heartfelt gratitude to Cooley Family Office and the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre for hosting this impactful initiative. The Training has provided a platform to equip legal, financial and family counselling professionals with the fundamental theory and essential skills and tools for family office mediation and collaborative practice.

While disputes arising from family offices and family businesses can involve a substantial financial stake, they are rarely just about the dollar sign. Often, they concern matters of legacy, succession and complex family relationships. High intensity emotions and power imbalances inevitably complicate these conflicts. As the Chinese proverb says, "Even an upright judge finds it hard to settle family matters", in Cantonese: 清官難審家庭事. While litigation can determine legal rights, it is very time-consuming and costly. It will also mean definitely a winner and a loser in the litigation, and this is undesirable in the context of family disputes, potentially destroying family bonds and tarnishing the reputation of family businesses.

This is where mediation and collaborative practice demonstrate their unique value. Mediation offers a private, confidential and amicable alternative where a neutral third party assists parties to explore tailor-made and mutually beneficial solutions. Collaborative practice takes a step further by including multidisciplinary professionals in

the discussion, so that they could provide holistic advice from legal, financial and psychological aspects in parallel.

This Training is timely in promoting the use of family mediation and collaborative practice. I am especially delighted to see that it directly supports two of Hong Kong's established priorities.

The first priority is Hong Kong's positioning. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is committed to expediting the development and deepening of Hong Kong's status as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre. Hong Kong has full support from the Chinese Mainland in this regard, as stated in the National 15th Five-Year Plan. The Government has also pledged this in the First Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (2026-2030). To achieve that, we will enhance our diversified and high-level dispute resolution services, including mediation.

In terms of our long history of promoting mediation, our department launched the "Mediate First" Pledge in 2009 to encourage the use of mediation as the first step to resolve disputes. Today, over 1 300 companies, organisations and individuals have signed the Pledge, symbolising the success of this campaign. Family mediation is featured from time to time in the DoJ's flagship events such as "Mediate First" Pledge events and Mediation Week.

In terms of legal infrastructure, we enacted the Mediation Ordinance in 2012. It provides a clear statutory framework grounded in confidentiality and party autonomy. We established the Working Group on Mediation Regulatory System in 2024 to review our mediation regulatory system. And hence, on the recommendations of the Working Group, we will introduce an amendment bill by the end of this year to facilitate the appointment of mediators when parties fail to reach a consensus on the choice of mediators.

As a matter of government-wide general policy, a mediation clause has been incorporated in all applicable government contracts since February 2025.

The establishment of the headquarters of the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed) in Hong Kong and the Government's support for the IOMed further underlines our commitment to developing Hong Kong into a global mediation capital.

The second priority is to promote the development of family offices, again as pledged in Hong Kong's Five-Year Plan. As a world-leading international financial centre and wealth management centre, we have been providing quality services for family offices to develop their businesses here. Such professional services certainly include Hong Kong's legal and dispute resolution services. Our Chief Executive has announced in the Policy Address this year that promotion will be stepped up following the passage of a bill to enhance the preferential tax regimes for, among others, single family offices. The goal is to attract more family offices to establish a presence in Hong Kong.

Indeed, with over 3 300 single-family offices now established in our city, our global appeal is clearer than ever. Hong Kong enjoys the distinctive advantages of "one country, two systems", a robust legal infrastructure based on the rule of law, and has a simple and low tax regime, world-class professional services and a globally experienced workforce. This Training in the past four days no doubt contributes to the edge of Hong Kong through cultivating a talent pool in family mediation and collaborative practice.

On this note, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the training team for sharing their valuable expertise and experience, and I congratulate every participant for completing the Training as a step elevating your professional practice. I wish you every success in putting the skills to use, and in playing an important part to expedite the momentum of Hong Kong's established priorities which I shared today. Thank you very much.

Ends/Tuesday, September 29, 2026