Speech by DSJ at Global University Presidents and Leaders Summit 2026 (English only) (with photo)
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Following is the speech by the Deputy Secretary for Justice, Dr Cheung Kwok-kwan, at the Global University Presidents and Leaders Summit 2026 today (October 28):

Professor Leung (Founding President and CEO of the Hong Kong Association for External Friendship, Professor Priscilla Leung), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. Let me begin by thanking the Hong Kong Association for External Friendship for inviting me to join today's session of the Global University Presidents and Leaders Summit 2026.

Today's session centres on the Belt and Road Initiative. With the growing number of collaborations among partner countries under the Initiative, legal certainty, trusted rules, effective dispute resolution and credible institutions have become indispensable. That is precisely where Hong Kong, under the principle of "one country, two systems", is positioned to serve as the legal anchor for this grand vision.

Hong Kong - a natural partner to Belt and Road countries

I recently joined the Chief Executive's mission trip and visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, two of our Belt and Road partners in Central Asia. It is striking that both of them respond to the demands of the international business community with a robust legal infrastructure. Kazakhstan's Astana International Financial Centre has adopted a common law framework, with an independent court and international arbitration centre. Uzbekistan's Tashkent International Financial Centre is moving in a similar direction. They grasp a simple truth: capital follows confidence, and confidence is built on law.

This is where Hong Kong comes in. Supported by "one country, two systems", we are the only common law jurisdiction in China and the only bilingual common law jurisdiction in the world using both Chinese and English. We are truly a gateway between China and the world. Hong Kong is therefore the natural partner for Belt and Road countries to connect their projects to the Chinese capital and global markets. Let me take our legal services as an example to demonstrate our unique strengths.

Hong Kong's unique strengths

Hong Kong offers a full spectrum of legal services - cross-border transactions, corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, intellectual property, maritime and shipping, ESG (environmental, social, and governance) and risk management - grounded in a common law framework compatible with international standards. The Department of Justice (DoJ)'s Panel List of Hong Kong Legal Services Providers Supporting "Go Global", published in April this year, fully reflects the breadth of Hong Kong's legal

professional services, supporting the full business cycle from deal structuring, due diligence, to financing, compliance and disputes resolution. For Belt and Road projects, that means legal certainty from negotiation to enforcement.

And within our spectrum, I would like to highlight dispute resolution services to illustrate our leading position. In the 2025 International Arbitration Survey by the Queen Mary University of London, Hong Kong ranked as the second most preferred seat for arbitration globally and first in the Asia-Pacific region. Further, since 2020, Hong Kong has been one of the four arbitration venues under the Law and Arbitration Clause of the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO). Earlier this year, the Chinese translation of "GENCON 2022", submitted by the Hong Kong Chamber of Shipping, became the first-ever approved non-English general purpose voyage charter party in BIMCO's century-long history.

Our sound and mature legal system explains why international legal organisations have given us a vote of confidence by establishing their presence in Hong Kong. In October 2025, the International Organization for Mediation, the first-ever international intergovernmental legal organisation dedicated to international mediation, set up its headquarters in Hong Kong. This affirms the city's position as a world-leading legal hub and its development as the global capital of mediation".

I am also pleased to share with you all that with the support of the Central People's Government, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) will establish its first overseas liaison office in its 100 years of history, and the opening ceremony will be held during the upcoming Hong Kong Legal Week next week. I am confident that the UNIDROIT Hong Kong liaison office, alongside the existing Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre, and the HCCH in Hong Kong (Asia Pacific Regional Office of the Hague Conference on Private International Law in Hong Kong), will lead to greater synergy for international collaboration.

With the support of the National 15th Five-Year Plan and the Hong Kong's First Five-Year Plan, the DoJ is committed to further deepening Hong Kong's status as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre. None of this happens without strong talent. That is why we set up the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy in 2024, which serves as a capacity-building and knowledge sharing platform for legal professionals in Hong Kong, the Chinese Mainland and other jurisdictions, in particular those along the Belt and Road. Looking ahead, we will construct the Hong Kong International Legal Service Building, which is a new landmark housing the Academy's headquarters, as well as other international legal and dispute resolution services institutions.

In terms of legal infrastructure, we are future-proofing our framework through ongoing arbitration and mediation legislative amendments, keeping it competitive and in line with the latest international practice. We are also actively promoting sector-specific dispute resolution like sports dispute resolution and maintaining arbitration-related

mutual legal assistance arrangements with the Chinese Mainland.

The Belt and Road Initiative is our country's vision for global connectivity. Hong Kong is not just a participant but an indispensable partner, bringing valuable contributions to the development of the initiative with our unique strengths.

With that in mind, I wish you all a very fruitful session filled with constructive ideas. Thank you.

Ends/Wednesday, October 28, 2026