Opening remarks by SJ at Hong Kong Legal Week 2026: UNIDROIT Centenary: Regional Conference for Asia-Pacific and Opening Ceremony of Asia-Pacific Liaison Office (English only) (with photos/video)
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Following is the opening remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at Hong Kong Legal Week 2026: UNIDROIT Centenary: Regional Conference for the Asia-Pacific and Opening Ceremony of the Asia-Pacific Liaison Office today (November 2):

The Honourable Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, Commissioner Cui (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Mr Cui Jianchun), Professor Moavero-Milanesi (President of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT), Professor Enzo Moavero-Milanesi), Professor Tirado (Secretary-General of UNIDROIT, Professor Ignacio Tirado), Consul-General, your Excellency, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to join you today at the opening ceremony of the UNIDROIT Asia-Pacific Liaison Office in Hong Kong.

The Chief Executive, Director-General Yu (Director-General of the Department of Treaty and Law, Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, Dr Yu Ning), and Professor Moavero-Milanesi have already spoken eloquently about the significance of the event to the HKSAR, the People's Republic of China, and UNIDROIT. I just wish to highlight three points: first, our long-standing and outstanding collaboration with UNIDROIT in the past; second, how the establishment of the Liaison Office can and will take our collaboration with UNIDROIT to the next level for the benefit of the Asia-Pacific region and beyond; and third, the potential synergy between the Liaison Office and other international organisations with a presence in Hong Kong.

Long-standing and outstanding collaboration with UNIDROIT

Hong Kong's relationship with UNIDROIT is longstanding, dearly close and deeply valued. The People's Republic of China has been a member of UNIDROIT since 1986, and representatives from the Government of the Hong Kong SAR has, as part of the Chinese delegation, participated in UNIDROIT's work in the past decades.

In recent years, we have established outstanding collaboration with UNIDROIT, as signified by in the signing of Memoranda of Understanding in 2021 and 2022 between my Department (Department of Justice) and UNIDROIT, which set out a clear framework for even closer co-operation. Such co-operation includes annual secondment of local legal professionals to the Secretariat of UNIDROIT in Rome. So far, we have sent nine secondees including solicitors and barristers in private practice as well as government counsel, and I am delighted to see some of them with us today.

Our co-operation also included regional forums and capacity-building programmes. A good example is our biennial Asia-Pacific International Private Law Summit. I am pleased that the third edition will take place here tomorrow, bringing together government officials, practitioners, academics and representatives of international organisations to discuss the region's evolving needs, and more importantly, how we should respond to them.

Against this background, today's opening ceremony is indeed a natural progression of our partnership based on mutual trust and confidence that has been built steadily over the years through continuous interactions.

UNIDROIT Asia-Pacific Liaison Office for Asia-Pacific and beyond

The establishment of the Liaison Office in Hong Kong will undoubtedly take our relationship with UNIDROIT to the next level.

The Liaison Office is not just an office for Hong Kong and UNIDROIT, it is an office for the whole region by providing a stable, convenient and effective platform in the Asia-Pacific region to support and facilitate the development of international private law through UNIDROIT's legislative, implementation and institutional work.

The Liaison Office will help to bring expertise closer to where it is needed. It will give the region a stronger and closer connection to UNIDROIT's work. It will further assist in strengthening UNIDRIOT's engagement with the governments of member states and non-member states, the legal profession, academia and the business community, to ensure that Asia-Pacific perspectives, experience, needs and expectations will be properly and sufficiently reflected in UNIDROIT's future work programmes.

Synergy between UNIDROIT Asia-Pacific Liaison Office and other international organisations in Hong Kong

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to announce that the Liaison Office will be located at the Hong Kong Legal Hub, in which we already host the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, the Department of Justice's (DoJ) Project Office for Collaboration with UNCITRAL (United Nations Commission on International Trade Law), and the AALCO (Asian African Legal Consultative Organization) Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre.

This concentration of international institutions in the same physical premises will create synergy in practice: such as closer day-to-day exchanges, stronger co-ordination in outreach and capacity-building programmes, and more accessible and convenient points of contact for governments and stakeholders with these institutions across the Asia-Pacific.

The Office will also be able to benefit from the wider legal ecosystem described by the Chief Executive, such as the International Organization for Mediation which is headquartered in Hong Kong, as well as other international organisations which have a presence in Hong Kong such as the Bank for International Settlements, the International Finance Corporation, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and very soon an office of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. These connections will strengthen outreach and engagement in different areas collectively or individually across the region. As such, Hong Kong offers a unique and distinctive platform where international and regional institutions can and will work in closer proximity, with greater continuity and impact. In this sense, it serves as a strong testament to the theme of this year's Hong Kong Legal Week: "Legal Synergy for a Shared Future".

Before I conclude, may I express our sincere gratitude to the UNIDROIT Governing Council and General Assembly for their decision and agreement to establish the Liaison Office in Hong Kong, in particular, to Secretary-General Tirado and his team throughout this process, and to the Central People's Government for its unwavering support.

To Hong Kong, hosting UNIDROIT's Liaison Office is both a privilege and a responsibility. It reflects UNIDROIT's trust and confidence in Hong Kong. At the same

time, it places on us the responsibility to support the Liaison Office to effectively create potential values for the Asia-Pacific and beyond. You have my words that the DoJ will do its best to work closely with UNIDROIT and with all stakeholders to support the work of the Liaison Office.

On this note, I wish the Liaison Office every success. Thank you very much.

Ends/Monday, November 2, 2026