Closing remarks by SJ at Hong Kong Legal Week 2026: The Fourth Legal Forum on Interconnectivity and Development (English only) (with photo/video)
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Following are the closing remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at Hong Kong Legal Week 2026: The Fourth Legal Forum on Interconnectivity and Development today (November 5):

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to all of you for participating in the Fourth Legal Forum on Interconnectivity and Development, co-organised by the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) (OCMFA) and the Department of Justice (DoJ) of the HKSAR, with support from the Legal Affairs Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR.

This year marks the opening year of the National 15th Five-Year Plan, which has placed significant emphasis on accelerating the development of the system and capacity for the rule of law in foreign affairs, improving mechanisms for international commercial mediation, arbitration, and litigation, and supporting the furtherance of the role of the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed). The National 15th Five-Year Plan also reaffirms the HKSAR's unique role and strengths, with a clear goal of deepening its development as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre, as well as promoting it as an international hub for high-calibre talent. The unique role and strengths of the HKSAR have been thoroughly discussed and demonstrated by our keynote speakers and panel discussions this morning.

Deepening its development as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre

It is worth repeating that the HKSAR is the only common law jurisdiction within China with a robust legal framework and an independent judiciary, and a deep pool of skilled legal professionals. Over the years, we have developed the HKSAR into an international legal and dispute resolution services centre, with diversified and all-round mechanisms for resolving international disputes, including litigation, mediation and arbitration.

Litigation

During his keynote speech, the Chief Judge of the High Court, Mr Justice Jeremy Poon, highlighted the significance of international commercial litigation in the HKSAR and shared the latest developments, including the Judiciary's plan to establish the Hong Kong International Commercial Court (HKICC). Building on Hong Kong's well-established common law jurisprudence on international commercial law that is highly regarded by the international business community and foreign investors, the establishment of the HKICC represents a timely and effective response to the increasing

demand for a specialised judicial platform, dedicated to handling cases involving legal and factual complexities arising from the significant growth in international and cross-border commercial activities in recent years. Capitalising on the international background of its judges who may come from different common law jurisdictions and our efficient litigation procedures, the HKICC can make significant contributions to the development of international commercial law, and further consolidate the international reputation and status of Hong Kong's common law system.

Mediation and arbitration

In the "All-Round International Dispute Resolution Hub - Hong Kong" session today, we are privileged to have the Secretary-General of the IOMed, the Chairman of the Hong Kong Mediation Accreditation Association Limited and the Director of the AALCO Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre with us. Through the unique lenses of their respective organisations, the distinguished speakers shared their insights and experiences on the topic from the angles of practice in international mediation, resolving investor-state disputes through mediation, as well as pathways and prospects for developing Hong Kong as a sports arbitration centre.

Under the HKSAR's First Five-Year Plan, the HKSAR Government will implement reforms to the mediation regulatory system, with a view to providing more international, inclusive and professional mediation services, and will fully support the IOMed in better fulfilling its role. In this regard, the DoJ aims to implement enhancements to the legal frameworks of mediation in the near future to streamline processes, making them more accessible and user-friendly. As for arbitration, according to a survey by Queen Mary University of London, the HKSAR is one of the most preferred arbitration seats in the world and is the most preferred seat in the Asia-Pacific region. The DoJ will also strive to enhance the arbitration legal framework by amending the Arbitration Ordinance. The consultation in this respect ended last week and my colleagues are finalising the proposed amendments.

Moreover, the DoJ is in the process of preparing for the construction of the Hong Kong International Legal Service Building to be situated next to the IOMed headquarters, which will provide state-of-the-art facilities and an environment for international legal and dispute resolution services institutions to conduct arbitration, mediation, legal talent exchanges and training, international legal conferences and research.

Nurturing a new generation of legal talent

For the sustainable development of the HKSAR as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre, ensuring a steady supply of legal talent is critical. The DoJ has been relentless in its efforts to nurture local legal talent through continuous provision of training opportunities, especially in the practice of foreign-related legal affairs.

In the "Hong Kong New Generation Legal Roundtable" session of the Legal Forum, participants of the DoJ secondment programmes to international organisations and "Belt

and Road" Visits (Belt and Road Visits for Hong Kong Young International Legal Talents), our new generation of legal talent, have shared their invaluable experiences and key learning points from the secondment and visits, and explored the role that young legal talent can play in "Contributing to National Development on Foreign-Related Rule of Law".

With the strong support from the Central People's Government, the DoJ has established secondment arrangements with law-related international organisations, including the Hague Conference on Private International Law, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, the IOMed and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. By participating in the work of such organisations, local legal talent could gain knowledge of the operation of international organisations, broaden their horizons through working with international law experts, and inject a Hong Kong perspective when shaping the development of international law.

At the same time, the Belt and Road Visits for Hong Kong Young International Legal Talents, jointly organised by the OCMFA and the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy of the DoJ, allow young legal professionals from Hong Kong to better understand regional legal practices and multilateral co-operation mechanisms, and to experience first-hand the fruitful outcomes of co-operation between China and the countries along the Belt and Road. It is heartening to see the fruits of our capacity-building programmes and I look forward to seeing our new generation of legal professionals taking the available opportunities to explore and learn, using their skills and talents unreservedly in contributing to China's, including the HKSAR's, development in foreign-related rule of law.

Ladies and gentlemen, as President Xi emphasised in the 18th BRICS Summit, "fairness and justice are what people aspire to, and international rules should be written jointly by all nations" (公平正義是人心所向，國際規則應該由各國共同書寫). He urged states to defend the rule of international law, uphold basic principles of international relations such as sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs, and peaceful settlement of disputes, and ensure that international law and rules are applied equally without double standards. At a time when geopolitical tensions and strains in economic and trade relations from unilateralism and protectionism appear to dominate world news headlines, China stands firm in its commitment to revitalising multilateralism and advancing foreign-related rule of law as a means to effectively respond to international conflicts and emerging global challenges and risks.

In keeping with this spirit, we will continue our ongoing efforts to reinforce the HKSAR's role as a leading international legal and dispute resolution services centre and capacity building hub, ensuring that our institutions advance with the times to meet ever-changing needs. May we all work together to chart a course towards a harmonious world based on shared values, where differences and disputes can be resolved and settled through open dialogue and in a rule-based and peaceful manner.

Last but not least, I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the speakers and participants who have made this Legal Forum a success. Thank you for joining us today. I look forward to seeing you again at the Legal Forum next year.

Ends/Thursday, November 5, 2026