

**For discussion on  
23 January 2024**

**Legislative Council Panel on  
Administration of Justice and Legal Services**

**Updates on cooperation with international legal and dispute  
resolution bodies and attracting their presence or carrying out of  
activities in Hong Kong:  
International Organization for Mediation (IOMed)**

**PURPOSE**

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposed works project for the conversion of the Old Wan Chai Police Station (OWCPS) into the headquarters of the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed).

**BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATIONS**

2. Under the National 14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan and the Greater Bay Area Development Plan, the Central People's Government (CPG) has strategically positioned Hong Kong as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre in the Asia Pacific region. With a view to raising Hong Kong's international profile and promoting the strengths and opportunities for Hong Kong's legal and dispute resolution services, it is the Department of Justice (DoJ)'s ongoing policy initiative to strengthen cooperation with renowned international legal and dispute resolution bodies and attracting their presence to or carrying out of activities in Hong Kong.

3. This paper focuses on updating Members on DoJ's recent work in relation to the IOMed, in particular the Government's proposal to convert the OWCPS into the headquarters of the IOMed. Members will be updated on DoJ's work relating to other international bodies and organizations at a later stage.

*Bid for hosting the IOMed headquarters in Hong Kong*

4. The People's Republic of China signed the *Joint Statement on the Future Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation (Joint Statement)* with a number of interested States in 2022. With the staunch support from the CPG, the International Organization for Mediation Preparatory Office (Preparatory Office) was established in Hong Kong in early 2023 pursuant to the *Joint Statement*.

5. The Preparatory Office was established to carry out the preparatory work and conduct the negotiation of an international convention for the establishment of the IOMed (IOMed Convention). The IOMed, once established, will be an international inter-governmental organization that provides friendly, flexible, economical and efficient mediation services for international disputes and will be a useful supplement to the existing dispute resolution institutions and means of dispute resolution, providing a new platform for the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

6. Since its inauguration ceremony on 16 February 2023, the Preparatory Office has successfully held two rounds of negotiations for the IOMed Convention in Hong Kong. At the last round of negotiations, the negotiating parties have agreed on a bidding process for hosting the headquarters of the IOMed and the negotiating parties were invited to make submission of expression of interest by the end of November 2023. In line with the above-mentioned policy initiative, the HKSAR Government has expressed strong interest to the CPG for hosting the headquarters in Hong Kong and identified the OWCPs, a Grade 2 historic building, as a suitable site for the purpose. CPG has supported the proposal and submitted to the Preparatory Office an expression of interest for hosting the IOMed headquarters in Hong Kong. It is noted that the bid from China is the only submission received by the deadline. It is expected that a decision on the headquarters of the IOMed will be made at the third round of negotiations in early 2024 at the earliest.

7. The IOMed headquarters, if established in Hong Kong, will

undoubtedly strengthen the city's position as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre and mark the first time for the headquarters of an international inter-governmental organization to be hosted in Hong Kong. The IOMed will also become the first and only international inter-governmental organization specializing in mediation for resolution of international disputes, on par with the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, which specialize in other means of dispute resolution. Therefore, the establishment of the IOMed headquarters in Hong Kong would significantly raise the international profile of Hong Kong as a "capital" for mediation in the world, attracting dispute parties, mediators, lawyers and other professionals to Hong Kong for the purpose of mediation.

#### Related timeline

8. As agreed by the parties participating in the negotiation of the IOMed Convention, the potential site for the headquarters of the IOMed should be made available within 2025 to facilitate early commencement of operation of the IOMed once the negotiations have been successfully concluded in the near future. In order to meet the said timeline, DoJ has been working closely with other relevant bureaux and departments on the proposed works project. There is a need to renovate the OWPCS on a fast-tracked basis in preparation for accommodation use by the future IOMed and related purposes with the aim for substantial completion of the project by mid-2025.

## **PROPOSED PROJECT SCOPE AND NATURE**

#### Project scope

9. The scope of the proposed project includes renovation of the existing building and setting up of office, mediation and related supporting facilities to meet the operational needs of the IOMed, which comprise –

- (a) mediation facilities, multi-purpose / conference rooms of various sizes;
- (b) reception and entrances, waiting and security screening areas;

- (c) a library;
- (d) social exchange areas / work stations for participants in the mediation proceedings;
- (e) back of house areas, including archives and record storage, general storage, photocopying rooms, etc.; and
- (f) ancillary facilities including toilets, pantries, a lactation room, a building management office, outdoor car parking spaces, etc.

10. The OWCPS was designated as a Grade 2 historic building on 18 December 2009. To preserve the heritage value of the building, we have carried out an assessment of the heritage impact of the proposed works and have taken steps to minimize the impact on or alteration to the original building in the planning of the conversion works. The proposed project will adopt the principles of minimal intervention and reversibility such that changes or disturbance to the historic building will be kept to a minimum and through appropriate mitigation measures, the cultural significance of the building can be retained. The key proposed works for conservation in the conversion project include –

(a) Overall site approach

The OWCPS will be adaptively reused as mediation facilities. Intrusive elements on the existing building will be removed to reveal the original design of the historic building. The setting and U-shaped floor layout will be retained.

(b) Renovation, restoration and adaptation works

The main façade facing Gloucester Road will be preserved with the demolition of later-added partitions at verandahs to reveal the original building design of the open verandahs, which is a key character defining element to demonstrate the architectural significance of the OWCPS. Other key character defining elements of high significance, including timber windows/doors, rectangular pediment with a flagpole, authentic spaces such as cells, armoury rooms and exposed fireplaces, will be preserved/reused as far as practicable.

Any new alteration and additional works to the façade of the building will be at less obstructive locations and not affect the character exemplified by the main façades of the building and the U-shaped layout. The new alteration and additional works will be of compatible design and distinguishable from the existing building fabrics.

11. A site and location plan is at **Enclosure**.

## **HERITAGE IMPLICATIONS**

12. Given that the OWCPs is a Grade 2 historic building, the project is subject to a heritage impact assessment (HIA) in accordance with the prevailing requirements for heritage conservation, and an HIA has been conducted in the form of HIA report. DoJ consulted the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) on the HIA report at its meeting on 14 December 2023 and received its support.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

13. The Wan Chai District Council was consulted on 5 January 2024 and Members expressed support for the proposed project.

## **PROJECT PROGRAMME**

14. Subject to Members' comments, we plan to submit the proposed project to the Public Works Subcommittee for consideration and seek funding approval from the Finance Committee (FC) in the first quarter of 2024. Subject to FC's funding approval and success of the bid for hosting the IOMed headquarters in Hong Kong, we need to commence the renovation works as soon as practicable so that the project can be substantially completed by mid-2025, with a view to handing over the premises to the IOMed within 2025 according to the timeline mentioned in paragraph 8 above.

## **RELATED LEGISLATIVE EXERCISE**

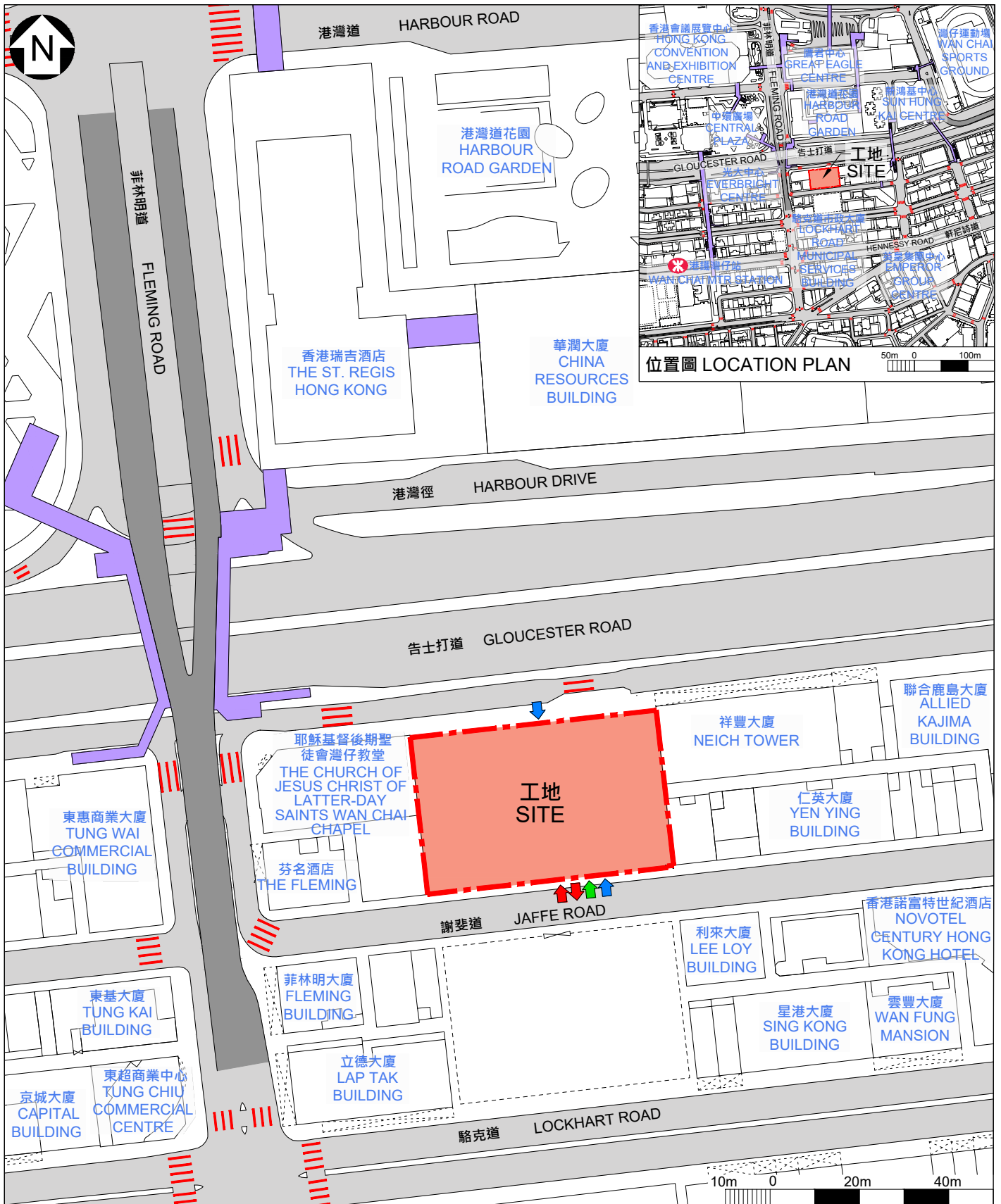
15. When it is decided that the IOMed headquarters will be located in Hong Kong, a Host Country Agreement (Host Agreement) will be concluded between the CPG and the IOMed, taking other similar host agreements with international organizations as reference. In addition, similar to other international organizations, the IOMed, its officials and participants in the mediation proceedings will enjoy certain privileges and immunities as agreed by the CPG and the IOMed under the IOMed Convention and the Host Agreement.

16. It is expected that the provisions of the IOMed Convention and the Host Agreement in relation to, among other matters, the IOMed's legal status and the privileges and immunities, would be given effect by local legislation in line with the established practice of the HKSAR. DoJ will kick start the necessary legislative procedures as soon as practicable after the conclusion of the IOMed Convention and the Host Agreement.

## **ADVICE SOUGHT**

17. Members are invited to comment on and support the proposed works project for the conversion of the OWCPs into the headquarters of the IOMed.

**Department of Justice**  
**January 2024**



圖例 LEGEND

- |                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  工地界線<br>SITE BOUNDARY               |  現有行人過路處<br>EXISTING AT-GRADE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING |  現有行人天橋<br>EXISTING PEDESTRIAN FOOTBRIDGE |
|  車輛出入口<br>VEHICULAR INGRESS / EGRESS |  行人出入口<br>PEDESTRIAN ENTRANCE / EXIT              |  無障礙出入口<br>BARRIER-FREE ENTRANCE / EXIT   |

工地平面圖  
SITE PLAN

40410  
改建舊灣仔警署為政府間國際組織總部  
THE CONVERSION OF OLD WAN CHAI POLICE STATION INTO THE HEADQUARTERS OF AN INTERNATIONAL INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION



ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT 建築署