

**For discussion on
22 June 2026**

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

**Latest progress of hosting international legal and dispute resolution
organizations in Hong Kong, including the International Organization for
Mediation and the International Institute for the
Unification of Private Law**

INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to brief Members on the latest progress and milestone achievements of the Department of Justice (“DoJ”) concerning the hosting of international legal and dispute resolution organizations in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“HKSAR”), including the International Organization for Mediation (“IOMed”) and the Asia-Pacific Liaison Office (“Liaison Office”) of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (“UNIDROIT”) at the Hong Kong Legal Hub.

BACKGROUND

2. In alignment with the latest National 15th Five-Year Plan of the Central People’s Government (“CPG”) which sets out the HKSAR’s strategic position as the “three centres and a hub”, the DoJ is determined to maintain the HKSAR’s established status as an international legal and dispute resolution services center, and to continue its work in enhancing collaboration with various international organizations to buttress its strategic position under the framework of the latest Five-Year Plan and to further contribute to the country’s efforts in promoting foreign-related rule of law.

3. One of the DoJ’s ongoing initiatives is to actively promote and strengthen the competitiveness of the HKSAR as an international legal hub. This includes attracting renowned international organizations to establish their

presence in the HKSAR. By facilitating their work especially in the field of international legal and dispute resolution, building stronger connections with these organizations, and promoting international legal talent exchanges as well as collaboration, we can leverage the HKSAR's unique common law traditions under the framework of "One Country, Two Systems", act as a bridge between the East and the West, and showcase our strength as an international legal hub.

4. DoJ previously briefed members on the progress concerning the hosting of the headquarters of IOMed and the establishment of the Liaison Office of UNIDROIT in the HKSAR. This paper provides Members on the latest progress on this matter.

(A)INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MEDIATION (IOMed)

Establishment and Official Commencement of Operations of the International Organization for Mediation in the HKSAR

5. The Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation (the "IOMed Convention") was signed in the HKSAR on 30 May 2025. In accordance with IOMed Convention, and following the completion of ratification procedures by three countries including China, the IOMed Convention officially entered into force on 29 August 2025, and took effect for China (including the HKSAR) on the same day. Subsequently, on 20 October 2025, IOMed held the inaugural session of its Governing Council in the HKSAR and authorized the official commencement of operations of the IOMed on the same day. The IOMed became the first-ever intergovernmental international organization to establish its headquarters in the HKSAR, as well as the world's first-ever intergovernmental international organization dedicated to resolving international disputes through mediation¹.

6. Based on the voluntariness of the parties, the IOMed mediates disputes between States, disputes between States and nationals of other States (including international investment disputes), as well as international commercial disputes between private entities. It serves as an important mechanism for implementing the requirement of peaceful resolution of

¹ For further information on the IOMed, please refer to its official website (<https://www.iomed.int/>).

international disputes including mediation, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations, aiming to achieve win-win cooperation among all parties to a dispute, and carries great significance for improving global governance, promoting world peace, and maintaining the stability of the international order. As of 2 June 2026, the number of Signatory States to the Convention has increased from 37 at its inception to 43, and the number of Contracting States that have completed the ratification process has increased from 8 to 14.

7. Legally, the IOMed is an intergovernmental international organization with independent legal personality. The Governing Council, composed of representatives from Contracting States, serves as its decision-making body. The Secretary-General, Professor Teresa Cheng, SC, acts as the legal representative and chief official of the IOMed, and leads the operation of the Secretariat in accordance with the IOMed Convention and relevant rules and regulations.

8. The National 15th Five-Year Plan explicitly supports the furtherance of the role of the IOMed. Although the Government will not directly participate in the operations of the IOMed, it will maintain communication and liaison with, and fully support and facilitate the development of, the IOMed, working together to develop HKSAR's position as a global mediation centre and build a "Global Capital of Mediation".

Measures and Progress of the Government in Fully Supporting and Facilitating the IOMed

9. The Government has been actively taking measures to provide support to the establishment of the IOMed in the HKSAR. The IOMed headquarters, with the support of the Government, was converted from the Old Wan Chai Police Station, a Grade 2 historic building, and the Government will continue to provide maintenance support for this headquarters building.

10. In terms of legal framework, in line with established practice for international organizations, the DoJ has through the making of the International Organizations (Privileges and Immunities) (International Organization for Mediation) Order (Cap. 558Q) to implement in the local laws the relevant provisions of the IOMed Convention. The Order is deemed to have come into effect on 29 August 2025, ensuring that the IOMed can operate effectively in

the HKSAR in accordance with the IOMed Convention.

11. The DoJ actively encourages legal talents in the HKSAR to participate in the work of the IOMed. Currently, the IOMed maintains a “List of General Mediators” to handle disputes such as international investment disputes and international commercial disputes. Among the 24 mediators designated by China to the said List, 10 are from the HKSAR². All of them are leading figures in the industry with high prestige and credibility in the legal sector, possessing extensive experience in mediation. According to the information of the IOMed, its first successfully mediated case was also handled by a Hong Kong lawyer specializing in maritime law, achieving a breakthrough for the HKSAR in maritime law and dispute resolution services.

12. In addition to a total of 4 previously seconded government counsel, the DoJ also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the IOMed in January 2026 on the secondment of Hong Kong legal professionals. This allows Hong Kong legal talents to contribute to development of the IOMed and leverage their strength in respect of foreign-related rule of law.

13. The Government also actively supports and collaborate with the IOMed on the promotional work. For instance, with the support of the DoJ, the IOMed successfully hosted the Global Mediation Summit in Hong Kong on 8 May 2026. This Summit was the first international conference organized by the IOMed since its commencement of operations, attracting around 1,000 in-person and online participants from over 60 countries and regions from different legal systems. Participants included high-level representatives of IOMed Signatory States, policymakers, renowned mediators, business leaders, prominent legal professionals, and academics, yielding remarkable results in promoting the IOMed.

14. The Government also actively strives to provide promotional opportunities for the IOMed at suitable international conferences, such as the Legal Week, the Belt and Road Summit, and the APEC Finance Ministers’ Meeting to be held this year. In addition, the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy will promote the IOMed through training and

² including Mr Rimsky Yuen, SC, Dr Anthony Neoh, SC, Ms Winnie Tam, SC, Mr Victor Dawes, SC, Mr Laurence Li, SC, Professor Priscilla Leung, Professor Zhao Yun, Mr Nicholas Chan, Dr Thomas So and Mr Edward Liu.

capacity-building projects.

15. Considering the wide range of international disputes handled by the IOMed, the Government encourages enterprises to actively consider incorporating the model dispute resolution clauses of the IOMed into their international contracts, adopting a “Mediation First, Arbitration Next” approach to dispute resolution, and designating the IOMed as the specified institution to handle mediation proceedings. In the absence of the IOMed’s model dispute resolution clauses in their contracts, enterprises are also encouraged to submit their disputes to the IOMed for handling after such disputes arise. Furthermore, the IOMed’s services also covers international organizations. For instance, intergovernmental multilateral development banks may actively consider including options for mediation by the IOMed in the clauses of their international financing projects and international commercial contracts.

16. Building on the Government’s existing policy regarding the inclusion of mediation clauses in government contracts, the DoJ is exploring ways to further enhance the use of the IOMed services. For instance, where government contracts involve international commercial matters, priority should be given to submitting the relevant disputes to the IOMed for handling. At the same time, the DoJ is actively promoting the inclusion of the IOMed’s dispute resolution options in suitable international agreements to which the HKSAR is a party (such as Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements and Free Trade Agreements). The Government is also exploring with the IOMed the establishment of a special panel of mediators for commodity trading disputes.

17. The DoJ is currently preparing for the construction of the Hong Kong International Legal Service Building adjacent to the headquarters of the IOMed. To complement the future development of the IOMed, the DoJ will provide additional space for the IOMed within the new building. The IOMed may also utilize the high-end conference facilities inside the building, including international-standard conference halls, training facilities, and dispute resolution facilities. This is expected to create synergy between the IOMed and other legal organizations within the Hong Kong International Legal Service Building, thereby promoting international cooperation, pooling resources, and strengthening HKSAR’s positioning as an international legal and dispute resolution centre.

(B)INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE UNIFICATION OF PRIVATE LAW (UNIDROIT)

Background

18. With the support of the CPG, DoJ and UNIDROIT have been exploring the possibility of setting up a Liaison Office in the Hong Kong Legal Hub in the past few years. At the 103rd session of the General Council of UNIDROIT from 8 to 10 May 2024, members of the Governing Council requested that the UNIDROIT Secretariat continue discussions with DoJ and prepare a substantive report on the HKSAR's proposal to establish a Liaison Office for consideration at the 105th session of the Governing Council. The ensuing discussions between the HKSAR and UNIDROIT led to refinements to the proposal and the production of a detailed report by the UNIDROIT Secretariat, which was then considered by the Governing Council of UNIDROIT at its 105th session during 20 to 23 May 2025. The Governing Council expressed support for the proposal and recommended that the General Assembly to consider establishing the Liaison Office in the HKSAR in 2026 at its 85th session. On 11 December 2025, at its 85th session, the General Assembly of UNIDROIT approved the proposed establishment of an Asia-Pacific Liaison Office in the HKSAR in 2026. The Liaison Office will be the first overseas office of UNIDROIT in its 100 years of history, and will be opened in the HKSAR as part of this renowned international organization's centenary celebrations.

The HKSAR's Commitments

19. Pursuant to the proposal, the HKSAR Government is committed to providing support to UNIDROIT to facilitate the establishment of its Liaison Office at the Hong Kong Legal Hub, including providing fully furnished office premises to house the Liaison Office in the Former French Mission Building at the Hong Kong Legal Hub in Central.

20. Currently, the Hong Kong Legal Hub also houses various other local and international law-related organizations. It is expected that the addition of UNIDROIT to the Hong Kong Legal Hub will further encourage dialogue amongst legal professionals, generate synergies for these organizations and bolster the HKSAR's reputation in the legal arena. At the Hong Kong Legal

Hub, the Liaison Office will also be able to utilize the multiple conference rooms and meeting facilities to connect with its partners, stakeholders and organize events to raise the profile and visibility of UNIDROIT in the Asia-Pacific Region (“Region”).

21. In terms of staffing arrangements, the Liaison Office will be headed by a legal professional and supported by an office manager. Incidental logistical support will also be provided to UNIDROIT’s Liaison Office where appropriate.

22. It is also anticipated that DoJ will further collaborate with UNIDROIT especially with the Liaison Office in capacity building initiatives that help advance the work of UNIDROIT in the Region, and contribute to the modernization, harmonization and co-ordination of private and in particular commercial law between States and groups of States, as well as the formulation of uniform law instruments, principles and rules with a view to achieving these objectives.

Timeline

23. Since December 2025, preparatory work has been undertaken by DoJ and the UNIDROIT Secretariat to formalize administrative and operational arrangements necessary for the official opening of the Liaison Office at the Hong Kong Legal Hub in the 4th quarter of 2026. On 12 March 2026, the HKSAR Government and UNIDROIT entered into a Memorandum of Administrative Arrangements, which sets out the administrative framework regarding the establishment of the Liaison Office, as well as the functions to be undertaken by the respective parties. Renovation works are being undertaken at the Hong Kong Legal Hub to prepare refurbished office space for the Liaison Office, with such works targeted to be completed by the 3rd quarter of 2026. Recruitment of personnel for the Liaison Office has commenced in the 2nd quarter of 2026. The official opening ceremony of the Liaison Office is scheduled to be held in early November 2026 during the Hong Kong Legal Week 2026. It is targeted that the Liaison Office would be staffed and ready to commence operations by the end of 2026.

24. At the 107th session of the Governing Council of UNIDROIT during 27 to 29 May 2026, progress regarding the establishment of the Liaison Office

in the HKSAR was reported to members of the Governing Council in Rome, Italy. DoJ and the UNIDROIT Secretariat will continue to closely communicate with each other and engage in preparatory work in accordance with the agreed schedule.

The Value of Hosting the Liaison Office in the HKSAR

25. The approval of the proposal by the General Assembly of UNIDROIT which has 65 member states from different continents casts a vote of confidence in the excellent rule of law in the city. It is a milestone achievement to both UNIDROIT and to the HKSAR, as it marks the first regional presence of this Europe-based international organization in the Asia-Pacific. The upcoming establishment of the Liaison Office of UNIDROIT in the Hong Kong Legal Hub will undoubtedly fortify the HKSAR's preeminence as a global legal hub and bring to the city various benefits in the long run.

26. Practically speaking, the presence of a reputable international legal organization in the HKSAR will enable legal professionals in the city to have greater exposure to the meaningful work of UNIDROIT. The legal sector can benefit from enhanced academic exchange and greater connection with international partners through participating in capacity building initiatives to be organized by the Liaison Office. There will also be potential work opportunities in the Liaison Office for the local legal community as qualified legal professionals may apply to work in the Office and gain invaluable experiences as a legal expert in an international organization. This is in addition to the existing secondment arrangements between DoJ and UNIDROIT, whereby Hong Kong legal professionals may apply for secondment to the Secretariat of UNIDROIT in Rome, Italy. Moreover, the possible secondment of legal professionals and interns from other UNIDROIT Member States to the Liaison Office will also enhance the diversity of the pool of legal talents in the HKSAR, further cultivating the exchange of ideas in the Hong Kong Legal Hub.

27. Going forward, DoJ will endeavour to ensure the timely opening of the UNIDROIT Liaison Office within this year, and continue to strengthen its meaningful collaboration with UNIDROIT in the years to come.

WAY FORWARD

28. DoJ will step up its engagements and collaborative efforts with international organizations, particularly those concerning IOMed and UNIDROIT, and take forward its policy initiatives in buttressing the HKSAR's status as an international legal and dispute resolution centre in the Region. It is clear that DoJ's continual efforts in capacity-building with international organizations have been widely and positively recognized by the international legal community, as members of which have frequently provided positive feedback on the events organized by Hong Kong-based offices of various international legal organizations. The hosting of the offices of international organizations at the strategic location of the Hong Kong Legal Hub is highly beneficial to the city, as they have drawn in a significant number of legal talents and dispute resolution experts to the HKSAR, bringing new perspectives and unique expertise to the city, and further catalyzing legal innovation in the Region.

29. With the presence of the IOMed headquarters and the upcoming establishment of UNIDROIT's Liaison Office in the HKSAR, DoJ will continue to contribute to the promotion of the use of mediation as a meaningful alternative dispute resolution mechanism and the development of international law in the Region, while further raising the HKSAR's international profile and creating fresh and valuable opportunities for the local legal sector.

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