

# Speech by CE at Signing Ceremony of the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the Signing Ceremony of the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed) today (May 30):

Honourable Minister Wang Yi (Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs), Your Excellencies, ministers and officials from around the world, honourable representatives of international organisations, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I am delighted to join you on this historic occasion: to celebrate with you the signing of the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation.

Gathered here today, in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, are high-level representatives of over 80 countries from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe; and from the United Nations and about 20 international organisations. A very warm welcome to Hong Kong!

It is a privilege for us to host this signing ceremony, and to serve as the IOMed headquarters, once the Convention enters into force.

This singular occasion is made possible by the ongoing and dedicated efforts of China, our country, in working with around 20 states, since late 2022, to establish an intergovernmental organisation devoted to mediation. After five rounds of intensive negotiation since 2023, co-ordinated by the IOMed Preparatory Office, the negotiating states concluded the very Convention signed today.

The IOMed will become the world's first intergovernmental international legal organisation dedicated to resolving international disputes through mediation. It also reflects our shared confidence in mediation as a peaceful means to maintain international peace and security, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations.

The IOMed will provide a pathway for countries – regardless of culture, language and legal system – to resolve international disputes based on mutual respect and understanding. This is increasingly important amid mounting geopolitical tensions. When protectionism threatens to derail the international trade order, and when unilateralism looms over global supply chains, it is dialogue – not division – that restores balance.

China has long championed equity and unity. The Chinese virtue of "和而不同", meaning "harmony in diversity", is deeply rooted in our community and culture. This value of mutual respect in spite of differences also sits at the heart of mediation, the IOMed, and a world that seeks co-operation over conflict.

Despite geopolitical turbulence, Hong Kong builds bridges, not walls. Under our unique "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong is the only world city that enjoys both the China advantage and the global advantage. With the support of the National 14th Five-Year Plan, Hong Kong has risen as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre in the Asia-Pacific region.

We are the only common law jurisdiction in China, and the only jurisdiction in the world with a bilingual common law system in both Chinese and English. We have a long tradition of the rule of law, and our courts exercise their judicial power independently. Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal, which is vested with the power of final adjudication, has on its bench eminent jurists from both Hong Kong and overseas common law jurisdictions.

Our robust, efficient and well-respected legal system is supported by world-class legal and dispute resolution professionals. Often bilingual or even multilingual, they are well-versed in international rules and practices, and help to position Hong Kong as a preferred venue for dispute resolution.

In this year's International Arbitration Survey, Hong Kong is the most preferred seat of arbitration in the Asia-Pacific region, and shares second place globally with another jurisdiction. Our economy also came first in "business legislation" and "international trade" in the World Competitiveness Yearbook. In the latest Business Ready Report published by the World Bank Group, Hong Kong ranks eighth in "dispute resolution" among the 50 economies covered.

All this underscores Hong Kong's effectiveness as a "super connector" and "super value-adder" among many economies. We contribute to cross-border investment and economic activity through our top-notch professional services. Our "one country, two systems" advantages make us well-placed to be the headquarters of the important institution of the IOMed.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is devoted to supporting the IOMed's provision of friendly, flexible, economical and efficient mediation services. We actively promote a vibrant culture of mediation. In fact, it is a general policy to incorporate a mediation clause in all government contracts. We are also enhancing the system on local accreditation and disciplinary matters of the mediation profession.

And we go all out to build bridges with the world. Hong Kong will actively promote the IOMed's valuable work in settling international disputes through mediation, and advocate mediation as a global tool for peace and

justice across borders.

Ladies and gentlemen, the establishment of the IOMed's headquarters in Hong Kong is a great honour for our city. The headquarters, as you may know, will be based in the building that once housed the Wan Chai Police Station, just a stone's throw away from here. Built in 1932, this iconic building has a long association with law and order in Hong Kong. From its prime downtown location, it has also witnessed the transformation of our city that has long treasured unity. In its new role as the IOMed headquarters, the building will play a vital part in the future of Hong Kong as a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services.

We are working to complete the conversion of the building for its new mission. I'm happy to say that it could open its doors as early as the end of this year. We look forward not only to welcoming its new occupants, but also to supporting them in building new bridges for a more connected, peaceful and prosperous future through mediation.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Central Government for its staunch support of Hong Kong, allowing Hong Kong the honour of housing the IOMed headquarters here. My sincere gratitude also goes to the international community, for placing your trust and confidence in our city. Let's renew our commitment to peace, justice and the rule of law. Let's cultivate a mediation culture together. Let's build a strong IOMed for a global community of shared future founded on peace and prosperity. Please enjoy the day and enjoy Hong Kong. Thank you.