

Speech by DSJ at Sports Law Conference Luncheon (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Deputy Secretary for Justice, Dr Cheung Kwok-kwan, at the Sports Law Conference luncheon organised by the Law Society of Hong Kong today (February 21):

President Roden Tong (President of the Law Society of Hong Kong),
distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is a great pleasure for me to speak at this lunch conference.

This morning, you heard from esteemed experts on the relationship between sports and law, highlighting how it supports the ever-expanding sports industry – locally, regionally and globally. As the sports market continues to grow, there is an increasing demand for dispute resolution services tailored to address a wide range of sports-related issues, including competition-related disputes, contractual disputes, and governance matters. In the next few minutes, I would like to share with you the Government's latest initiatives aimed at fostering the growth of sports dispute resolution in Hong Kong.

Over the past two years, the Government, specifically the Department of Justice (DoJ) and the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, has been actively engaging with key stakeholders in order to better understand the needs of our sports sector.

In the Chief Executive's Policy Address last year, the Government announced the initiative to explore establishing a sports dispute resolution mechanism and promote sports arbitration, leveraging the institutional advantages of Hong Kong in dispute resolution. Specifically, the Government supports the industry in launching a pilot scheme on sports dispute resolution in Hong Kong within 2025.

To this end, we have met with the two legal professional bodies in Hong Kong, the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association, as well as the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC), to explore Hong Kong's potential for establishing a sports dispute resolution mechanism. Through these dialogues, it has become clear that the industry seeks a neutral, fair, and efficient system for resolving sports disputes.

Furthermore, during a meeting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services last May, the DoJ briefed Members on Hong Kong's potential for the development of sports dispute resolution, and sought their views on its future direction. Members of the Legislative Council and the two legal professional bodies expressed unanimous support for advancing sports dispute resolution in Hong Kong and exploring

the establishment of a dedicated dispute resolution mechanism.

To effectively implement the initiative, the DoJ has established the Advisory Committee on Sports Dispute Resolution, which I have the privilege to chair. The Advisory Committee comprises representatives from the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association. Their role is to advise the Government on the design, establishment and implementation of the pilot scheme. We held our first meeting last month to kick-start the preparatory work for the pilot scheme.

We are actively gathering input from stakeholders on the design and implementation mechanism of the pilot scheme. Just this week, we met with the SF&OC, and we will meet with LegCo Members next week. Preparatory work is in full swing, and our goal is to launch the pilot scheme in the second half of this year.

We will finalise the details of the pilot scheme and announce it after further deliberation with the Advisory Committee. Nonetheless, I would like to share a few preliminary thoughts with you today.

In the coming months, we will invite interested dispute resolution institution or institutions to submit proposals for the operation of the pilot scheme. We plan to appoint a suitable administering body to oversee the pilot scheme and provide institutional support for the conduct of arbitration and mediation under the pilot scheme, including compiling specific rules, recruiting and appointing mediators and arbitrators, devising fee structures, and administering the dispute resolution proceedings. In addition, to promote a wider use of lawtech and online dispute resolution, a technology provider will be engaged to provide the necessary technological infrastructure and support.

One of the primary objectives of the pilot scheme is to facilitate local athletes and sports associations in utilising alternative dispute resolution services. By doing so, we aim to promote a more accessible and efficient means of resolving disputes, ultimately supporting the development of the sports community.

The pilot scheme is set to run for an initial period of about three years, allowing us to test the market, gather insights, and evaluate the need for refinement, extension or regularisation. We invite all of you here with us today – many of whom are dispute resolution experts – to support and actively participate in this initiative.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my gratitude to the Law Society of Hong Kong for organising the Sports Law Conference 2025, which provides an excellent platform for these important discussions. I am also very pleased to see various organisations hosting events and training in sports dispute resolution. Industry participation, capacity building, promotion and public education are crucial as we strive to advance the sports industry and strengthen the sports dispute resolution framework.

May we all embrace today's theme: "Be Just! Be a Good Sport!" And let's take a step further: let us cultivate a culture of effective sports dispute resolution, and build a good sports community that promotes growth and excellence. Thank you.

