

Legal Services



“The next generation of leading clients will come from this part of the world.”

Stuart Fuller, Global Managing Partner
King & Wood Mallesons

Hong Kong offers myriad benefits and services for international firms weighing a move to Asia. In particular, it offers incomparable legal services support and infrastructure, including an independent judiciary based on English common law, a solid and transparent regulatory framework as well as a clean and pro-business government.

We are home to more than 800 local solicitor firms and 70 foreign law firms; at least 70 of the 100 largest global law firms by revenue have a presence in Hong Kong. This concentration of legal talent - more than 9,000 practising solicitors and barristers - makes Hong Kong the international law capital of Asia and an ideal place to do business across the region.

Strengths

- The most liberal Asian jurisdiction in terms of permitting foreign lawyers to practise. There are no entry barriers for foreign law firms or foreign lawyers
- Abundant supply of talented legal professionals with international experience and exposure. Hong Kong lawyers possess excellent understanding of the Chinese legal environment and market knowledge
- Free flows of capital, information and communication
- Hong Kong is a major regional centre for dispute resolution with hundreds of major cases being resolved in Hong Kong each year involving trade, construction, joint ventures, shipping and the like
- With a strong global network of treaties and international agreements, Hong Kong is signatory to over 240 multilateral international conventions as well as having entered double taxation agreements (DTAs) with 35 jurisdictions to date

Opportunities

- The business of international law firms in Hong Kong is robust, mainly because the city boasts the largest presence of regional headquarters of multinational firms. Many of these firms even manage their global functions from Hong Kong. With a large concentration of top corporate decision makers coupled with Hong Kong's status as a leading financial service centre in Asia, there is high demand for legal services in Hong Kong
- Requirement for international legal advice - an increasing number of Mainland enterprises have established their presence in Hong Kong to prepare for expansion. As at July 2016, there are 980 Hong Kong-listed Mainland companies
- Growing demand for legal services to support fund raising and M&A activities. Hong Kong was ranked as the world's largest IPO centre in 2015
- Increasing need for local legal advice as Hong Kong is the largest source of inward investment to the Mainland with US\$119 billion invested in the past decade
- With a significant boom in cross-border and international investment activities, there is an increasing need for an arbitration and mediation friendly environment within the region



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The Government of the Hong Kong
Special Administrative Region

Legal Services

Government Promotion and Coordination

The HKSAR government is determined to position Hong Kong as a centre for dispute resolution. Its initiatives and measures include:

- Timely and effective law reform such as the LLP Ordinance will enable law firms in Hong Kong to operate in the form of a limited liability partnership
- The Hong Kong courts are friendly to the use of alternative dispute resolution. There is no restriction on foreign law firms engaging in and advising on arbitration in Hong Kong. Parties in arbitration may retain advisers without restrictions as to their nationalities and professional qualifications
- The allocation of office space in the West Wing of the former Central Government Offices for use by legal, arbitration and mediation institutions to encourage legal services development in Hong Kong

Under CEPA

- Hong Kong law firms can operate in association with Chinese law firms, without geographic restriction
- Hong Kong law firms and Guangdong law firms are allowed to enter into an agreement under which Guangdong law firms may second Mainland lawyers to work as consultants on Mainland law in representative offices set up by Hong Kong law firms in Guangdong Province
- Hong Kong law firms' representatives in their Mainland representative offices are exempt from residency requirements
- Hong Kong barristers can act as agents in civil litigation cases on the Mainland in the capacity of citizens
- Hong Kong residents with Chinese citizenship can sit the legal qualifying examination in the Mainland
- Hong Kong residents who have acquired Mainland legal professional qualifications in order to undergo a one-year internship in a Mainland law firm may apply to practice as lawyers. Internship can be carried out in the branch office of a Mainland law firm set up in Hong Kong

As of July 2016, 24 law firms had obtained the Hong Kong Service Suppliers (HKSS) Certificate.

Useful Contacts

Companies Registry

Tel: (852) 2234 9933
Fax: (852) 2596 0585
www.cr.gov.hk

The Law Society of Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2846 0500
Fax: (852) 2845 0387
Email: sg@hklawsoc.org.hk
www.hklawsoc.org.hk

Hong Kong Bar Association

Tel: (852) 2869 0210
Fax: (852) 2869 0189
Email: info@hkba.org
www.hkba.org

Inland Revenue Department

Tel: (852) 2594 5300
Gen Tel: (852) 187 8088
Fax: (852) 2519 9316
Email: taxinfo@ird.gov.hk
www.ird.gov.hk

InvestHK Contact

Philip Kung

Head of Business and Professional Services
25/F, Fairmont House, 8 Cotton Tree Drive,
Central, Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 3107 1091
Fax: (852) 3107 9009
Email: pkung@investhk.gov.hk

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InvestHK is the department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government responsible for Foreign Direct Investment, supporting overseas and Mainland businesses to set up and expand in Hong Kong. We partner with clients on a long-term basis and are available at any stage of their business development process.

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25/F, Fairmont House,
8 Cotton Tree Drive, Central, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 3107 1000
Email: enq@investhk.gov.hk
www.investhk.gov.hk