

Title	Report on the activities of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) (1 January – 31 December 2024)
Document	Prel. Doc. No 18B of February 2025
Author	PB
Agenda Item	Item III.8
Mandate(s)	N/A
Objective	To report on the activities of ROAP
Action to be Taken	For Decision <input type="checkbox"/> For Approval <input type="checkbox"/> For Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> For Action / Completion <input type="checkbox"/> For Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Annexes	N/A
Related Documents	N/A

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Report on the activities of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) (1 January – 31 December 2024)

I. Introduction and strategic objectives

- 1 The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) is one of the two current Regional Offices (ROs) of the Permanent Bureau (PB) of the HCCH.¹ ROs are established to strengthen the HCCH's universality and inclusiveness and to increase the HCCH's visibility, capability, and relevance within a region.² In addition to its broad-spectrum work in Asia and the Pacific³, ROAP provides substantive support to the Transnational Litigation and Apostille Division.
- 2 ROAP's work programme is tailored to contribute to the strategic objectives of the HCCH:
 - a. promoting the universality of the Organisation by increasing awareness of the HCCH, the HCCH instruments and their benefits, as well as of private international law (PIL), among States and other stakeholders in the region;
 - b. promoting the inclusiveness of the HCCH by supporting the active involvement of States and other stakeholders in the region in its normative, post-Convention, and governance work;
 - c. assisting States in the region in the proper implementation and operation of HCCH instruments, including through the delivery of efficient, tailored post-Convention services and assistance.
- 3 ROAP is headed by a Representative for Asia and the Pacific, who works part-time and who is supported by a Legal Officer and an Office Manager. On 1 August 2020, Professor Yun Zhao became the fourth ROAP Representative. Mr Junbo Song joined ROAP in October 2024 as Legal Officer seconded from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, succeeding Mr Levi Gao in this position. In the same month, Ms Alix Ng retired as Office Manager, having held this position since ROAP's establishment in 2012. ROAP's new Office Manager, Ms Shelby Chan, joined the office in November 2024. Throughout 2024, ROAP's work was supported by 11 legal interns.
- 4 All costs for ROAP, including rental, salaries, and travel, are covered exclusively through the support provided by the Government of the Hong Kong SAR, under the instruction of central government of China.⁴

¹ For more information on the ROs, please consult Annex I of the "Report on the activities of the Regional Offices for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) (1 January – 31 December 2023)", Prel. Doc. No 21 REV for CGAP 2024, available on the website of the HCCH at www.hcch.net under "Governance" then "Council on General Affairs and Policy" and "Previous Councils on General Affairs and Policy". For more information on the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), please consult "Report on the activities of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) (1 January – 31 December 2024)", Prel. Doc. No 18A for CGAP 2025, available on the website of the HCCH at www.hcch.net under "Governance" then "Council on General Affairs and Policy".

² See the HCCH's [Rules for the Establishment of Regional Offices](#) ("Rules"), adopted in 2020. The Rules "do not apply retrospectively to already existing Regional Offices" (see para. 2) and so do not apply to either ROAP, established in 2012, or ROLAC, established in 2005. However, para. 3(a) of the Rules provides a list of characteristic objectives and outcomes of future ROs, which is inspired by, and is reflective of, the work currently being undertaken by ROAP and ROLAC.

³ For more information on the specific objectives assigned to ROAP upon its establishment, please consult the "Proposal to Establish an Asia Pacific Regional Office for the Hague Conference on Private International Law in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China", Info. Doc. No 2 of CGAP 2012, available on the website of the HCCH at www.hcch.net under "Governance" then "Council on General Affairs and Policy" and "Council on General Affairs and Policy Archive (2000-2015)".

⁴ Financing of ROAP differs from that of ROLAC, see Prel. Doc. No 18A for CGAP 2025. While the PB is grateful for China's continued financial support of ROAP, it nonetheless considers that, from a good governance perspective, the existence of differing approaches between the two existing ROs is inadequate and hopes that the matter will be addressed in the near future.

II. Work and progress in achieving the strategic objectives

A. Promoting the universality of the HCCH by increasing awareness of the HCCH, the HCCH instruments and their benefits, as well as of PIL, among States and other stakeholders in the region

- 5 Through its outreach efforts, ROAP contributes to increasing awareness and understanding of the importance of the HCCH and its instruments among States and other stakeholders in the region.
- 6 Its role in this regard has proven vital towards building and sustaining the momentum required to drive forward the adoption of key HCCH Conventions in the light of the many competing priorities faced by national legislatures. In 2024, two States from Asia and the Pacific became Contracting Parties to one or more HCCH Conventions: Bangladesh acceded to the 1961 Apostille Convention and Georgia ratified both the 2007 Child Support Convention and its Protocol. ROAP endeavours to provide tailored information and to offer support to States in the process of becoming a Member of the HCCH or becoming a Contracting Party to an HCCH Convention. Over the past year, it has had fruitful contacts with government officials, diplomats, and judges from various States in Asia and the Pacific who have expressed interest and / or submitted enquiries in this regard.
- 7 The participation in and / or organisation of meetings, seminars, workshops, and other events is one of the primary tools deployed by ROAP to engage with relevant stakeholders and reach out to new audiences. In 2024, ROAP conducted meetings with several States and organisations, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea, the consulates of various ASEAN States and of Australia, the Beijing Arbitration Commission, the Hong Kong Judicial Institute, and the International Organization for Mediation Preparatory Office. Through these meetings, ROAP explored possible avenues for expanding its collaboration with the relevant States and organisations, including the possibility of organising joint events and other initiatives on relevant HCCH Conventions, which are in turn expected to lead to increased awareness of the HCCH, the HCCH instruments and their benefits, as well as of PIL, among participating individuals and their institutions.
- 8 In addition to hosting HCCH events, ROAP has sought out opportunities to organise sessions or be given a platform within larger events hosted by partners so as to optimise its limited resources. In 2024, this included, for example, the Annual Academic Conference of the China Society for Private International Law and the Annual Session of the Asian African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO), as well as conferences and workshops organised by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Asian Academy of International Law (AAIL), the China Maritime Arbitration Commission, and the Ministry of Justice of Thailand. ROAP continues to provide assistance in the organisation of Hong Kong Legal Week, recognised in the region as a major international legal event. Through this role, ROAP actively seeks to promote the HCCH's work, strengthen its cooperation with relevant partners, and expand its network of contacts in the region. During Hong Kong Legal Week 2024, ROAP also attended a number of side events, including the second Asia-Pacific International Private Law Summit, in which the Representative for Asia and the Pacific participated as panellist in the session "Building Bridges by Strengthening Engagement in the Asia-Pacific Region".
- 9 In 2024, ROAP has continued to engage with law professors and students, in particular through the organisation of seminars and workshops at East China University of Political Science and Law, Hangzhou Normal University (China), Jinan University (China), Ocean University of China, Ramkhamhaeng University (Thailand), Shanghai University of Political Science and Law (China), Sichuan University (China), Universitas Padjadjaran (Indonesia), University of Macau (China), Wuhan University (China), and Xiamen University (China). ROAP's Representative also participated as speaker in academic events organised by the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Sun Yat-Sen

University (China). Engagement with the academic sector will continue to be expanded in 2025, with an emphasis on geographical diversification, which could set the basis for the conclusion of new cooperation agreements between the HCCH and universities in the region, and with them, unlock access to new resources for research, outreach, and translation activities.

B. Promoting the inclusiveness of the HCCH by supporting the active involvement of States and other stakeholders in the region in its normative, post-Convention and governance work

- 10 In relation to the HCCH's normative work, ROAP continues to promote the active involvement of the Asia Pacific region by raising awareness of ongoing projects, by engaging regional stakeholders in discussions on ongoing projects, by conducting research on relevant regional needs and initiatives, and by facilitating the direct participation of experts from the region.
- 11 In terms of post-Convention work, ROAP supported the continued engagement of States from the region through various activities, among which the organisation of two prominent regional webinars. The webinar "HCCH 2005 Choice of Court Convention: Fostering Access to Justice for Cross-Border Commerce in the Asia Pacific Region" brought together experts from China, Indonesia, and Singapore to analyse the implementation and operation of the Convention in their respective States. Later in the year, the "2024 Webinar on the HCCH 1980 Child Abduction Convention in Asia and the Pacific" provided a platform for representatives of Central Authorities and other experts from Australia, Japan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and the United States of America to share good practices in the implementation and operation of the 1980 Child Abduction Convention based on their direct experiences, with the aim of further strengthening the operation of the Convention in the region. These webinars attracted a wide audience of experts and students from the region. In 2024, ROAP also contributed to the preparations for the meeting of the Special Commission on the Practical Operation of the 1965 Service, 1970 Evidence, and 1980 Access to Justice Conventions, encouraging and facilitating the participation of States from the region.
- 12 Throughout 2024, ROAP actively fostered partnerships with other intergovernmental organisations, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to cooperation. In 2024, ROAP continued to build upon its collaboration with AALCO, which serves as an advisory body and forum for Asian-African cooperation in legal matters. Among other activities, ROAP travelled to Egypt and South Africa to participate in meetings with government representatives and other stakeholders together with AALCO; organised a side event during the 62nd Annual Session of AALCO; and provided an introductory presentation on the HCCH and the 2019 Judgments Convention to representatives of AALCO Members and non-Member States during an intensive training programme organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the AAIL. Another intergovernmental organisation from the region that is active in areas of particular relevance to the mandate of the HCCH is APEC, with whom ROAP ramped up collaboration in 2024. In particular, ROAP engaged APEC Members in discussions on the interplay between online dispute resolution and the HCCH Conventions through its participation in workshops organised by the APEC secretariat. Since many AALCO and APEC Members are not yet Members of the HCCH, ROAP's collaboration with these organisations creates valuable opportunities for these States to participate in the HCCH's post-Convention work and learn more about its Conventions. ROAP will continue to explore relevant avenues for cooperation with other intergovernmental organisations active in the region.
- 13 Finally, ROAP continues to support the active involvement of States in the Asia Pacific region in governance matters, including those relating to HCCH Membership, attendance at the meetings of the Council on General Affairs and Policy (CGAP) and the Council for Diplomatic Representatives (CDR), and participation in governance-related initiatives. For example, prior to the annual CGAP meeting, ROAP engages in formal and informal communications with the National Organs of States in the region with the aim of coordinating positions, responding to enquiries, and addressing or

transmitting concerns. ROAP's 2024 initiatives underscore a commitment to collaboration, knowledge exchange, and continuous improvement. Through these efforts, ROAP not only strengthens its own capabilities but also contributes meaningfully to the advancement of cooperation regarding HCCH Conventions in the Asia Pacific region.

C. Assisting States in the region in the proper implementation and operation of HCCH instruments, including through the delivery of efficient, tailored post-Convention services and assistance

- 14 ROAP contributes to the proper implementation and operation of HCCH instruments in the Asia Pacific region by providing various forms of post-Convention services and assistance. These include, for instance, acting as a direct point of contact for States seeking information and tailored advice on best practices or specific issues encountered; assisting States which are in the process of joining HCCH Conventions with the preparations for their entry into force; and facilitating the organisation of trainings or seminars aimed at judges, practitioners, government officials, and other professionals involved in the day-to-day operation of the HCCH Conventions and instruments. In 2024, for example, ROAP met with the Government of Japan to discuss the implementation and operation of the 1980 Child Abduction Convention, to which Japan is a Contracting Party. While assistance is most often requested by States which are already Contracting Parties to the relevant instrument, the receipt of tailored guidance during the preparatory period prior to joining a Convention can facilitate its smooth implementation and prevent challenges in its operation later on. In 2024, for example, ROAP assisted China in its preparations for the ratification of the 2005 Choice of Court Convention. It also continued to support Indonesia with the implementation and operation of the 1961 Apostille Convention, building upon the support previously provided during Indonesia's process of accession to the Convention. To ensure that guidance on the proper implementation and operation of HCCH Conventions is available to a wide range of actors, ROAP complements the provision of post-Convention assistance to individual States with activities open to multiple jurisdictions and stakeholders (see, for example, the previously mentioned "2024 Webinar on the HCCH 1980 Child Abduction Convention in Asia and the Pacific" and the webinar "HCCH 2005 Choice of Court Convention: Fostering Access to Justice for Cross-Border Commerce in the Asia Pacific Region"). ROAP also contributes to the development and translation of publications and other materials.
- 15 Current or prospective Contracting Parties from the region interested in benefitting from the PB's assistance in this regard are encouraged to contact ROAP to discuss the various possibilities.

III. Key upcoming projects and initiatives

- 16 In addition to its regular support of the work of the PB across all its divisions, ROAP intends to undertake the following specific activities in 2025:
- a. assisting in the preparations for the upcoming Asian Regional Workshop on the 1993 Adoption Convention, to be held in March 2025;
 - b. organising a webinar on the 2019 Judgments Convention, tentatively scheduled for April 2025;
 - c. supporting the organisation of an event at Wuhan University in mid-2025, focusing on either the Parentage/Surrogacy Project or the CBDCs Project;
 - d. co-hosting an event on international law, peace, and development in September 2025;
 - e. organising an event on transnational litigation during Hong Kong Legal Week in November 2025;
 - f. conducting courtesy visits to the Consulates General of ASEAN States in Hong Kong to explore avenues for cooperation (such as co-hosting events, building capacity, and establishing communication channels). Visits have been scheduled first with the Consulates General of

States that participated in HCCH Asia Pacific Week 2023 and indicated an interest in further collaboration;

- g. supporting the organisation of HCCH Asia Pacific Week 2025, contingent on the identification of a host State and the availability of resources;
- h. exploring the possibility of establishing long-term internship programmes with more universities in the region.

IV. Proposal to CGAP

- 17 The PB proposes the following Conclusions and Decisions, covering both ROs, for CGAP's consideration:

CGAP welcomed the reports of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), and recognised the services they continue to provide to HCCH Members. CGAP further:

- a. encouraged Members to offer concrete support towards the implementation of the activities and objectives of the ROs, including in the form of voluntary contributions, secondments, information, translations, and networking;
- b. invited States from the relevant regions that are currently considering the possibility of joining one or more HCCH Conventions, or of becoming HCCH Members, to contact their respective RO;
- c. invited National Organs, Central Authorities, and Competent Authorities to contact their relevant RO, where experience sharing with authorities of other Contracting Parties, or the academic sector, would be helpful to the effective implementation and operation of HCCH Conventions;
- d. invited States to facilitate, to the extent possible, the participation of their respective IHNJ members in the 4th Global meeting of the IHNJ and HCCH Judicial Roundtable which will take place in Singapore in 2025.