

CCCL & GIG: International Conference on Legal and Institutional Cooperation in the Greater Bay Area

Background

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA) initiative represents a crucial strategy aimed at integrating two Special Administrative Regions—Hong Kong and Macau—with nine Guangdong cities into a globally competitive economic zone. Envisioned as an innovative hub for fostering economic growth across China and Asia, the GBA aspires to lead in technology, finance, and trade. However, the region's diversity presents significant challenges, particularly in harmonizing legal and institutional frameworks across jurisdictions with distinct legal systems, governance structures, and economic priorities.

These challenges underscore the importance of conducting in-depth research on the GBA. As one of the most ambitious regional integration initiatives in the world, the GBA offers a unique opportunity to study the interplay between law, economics, and governance. Research on the GBA is not only vital for addressing practical issues such as cross-border legal complexities, regulatory alignment, and market integration but also for generating insights that can inform other regional integration efforts globally. By examining the GBA's successes and challenges, researchers can develop strategies to enhance legal harmonization, foster institutional cooperation, and support sustainable economic growth.

Recognizing the importance of these efforts, the Centre for Chinese and Comparative Law (CCCL) at the City University of Hong Kong School of Law and the Guangzhou Institute of the Greater Bay Area (GIG) partnered to organize the International Conference on Legal and Institutional Cooperation in the Greater Bay Area. This conference series, which includes two events—the first held in Hong Kong from January 27 to 28, 2024, and the second planned for the summer of 2025—aims to create a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue and practical solutions.

The mission of the conference was to foster meaningful discussions and collaborations on legal and institutional cooperation within the GBA. Its key objectives included:

- Addressing the complexities of aligning diverse legal systems across the region.

- Promoting the harmonization of laws and institutional frameworks to facilitate cross-border business operations.
- Providing a platform for academics and practitioners to share research and best practices.
- Informing policy development to advance the GBA's vision of seamless economic integration.

By prioritizing research on the GBA, the conference aims to contribute to the region's development as a model of regional integration. The insights generated will not only support the GBA's growth but also provide valuable lessons for other cross-border initiatives worldwide.

Introduction to the Engaging Parties

Guangzhou Institute of Greater Bay Area (GIG):

The GIG serves as a leading research institute dedicated to fostering economic, legal, and institutional integration within the GBA. Established in response to the evolving domestic and international landscape, the GIG is positioned at the forefront of China's reform and opening-up efforts, with the GBA representing a critical driver of modernization and common prosperity.

In recognition of its strategic importance, the GIG has embraced a multi-faceted mission: first, to contribute to the economic development of Guangzhou; second, to promote the deeper integration of Guangzhou within the GBA; and third, to support the integration of Hong Kong and Macau into the broader development framework of mainland China. The successful construction of the GBA is not only vital to the region but also holds far-reaching implications for the nation as a whole, positioning GIG with a profound historical responsibility.

Beyond its immediate objectives, the GIG is committed to shaping the narrative of Guangzhou and the GBA, enhancing China's global influence and soft power. With a focus on long-term sustainable development, the institute strives to provide insightful policy recommendations that serve both governmental and business decision-makers. By bridging research and practical applications, the GIG plays an instrumental role in advancing the GBA's economic ambitions and reinforcing its status as a model of integration and innovation.

Conference Highlights

1. Keynote Speech by Professor Zheng Yongnian

Professor Zheng Yongnian, an internationally renowned scholar and the Board Director of the Guangzhou Institute of the Greater Bay Area (GIG), delivered a compelling keynote address that set the tone for the conference. His analysis highlighted the legal and institutional challenges faced by the GBA, contextualized within broader global issues such as geopolitics, economic nationalism, and trade protectionism.

In his address, Professor Zheng emphasized the urgent need to address Hong Kong's increasing isolation by integrating both internal and external systems. He highlighted the importance of fostering openness, collaboration, and cross-border cooperation to strengthen the GBA's economic and institutional framework. Professor Zheng also underscored the region's potential to leverage its unique strengths to overcome systemic challenges, calling for coordinated efforts to ensure that the GBA evolves into a cohesive and globally competitive economic zone.

By providing a clear vision for the GBA's future, Professor Zheng's keynote set a forward-looking and action-oriented tone for the conference, inspiring meaningful discussions and innovative strategies to address the region's most pressing challenges.

2. Diverse Panel Discussions Covering Key Themes

The conference featured six thematic panels focusing on critical issues related to the GBA's legal, institutional, and economic integration. Each panel provided innovative perspectives and practical solutions:

- **Panel 1:** Examined constitutional, regulatory, and institutional issues, emphasizing legislative collaboration and institutional alignment.
- **Panel 2:** Addressed market integration and institutional convergence, drawing inspiration from the European Union's common market.
- **Panel 3:** Focused on private and commercial law harmonization, including regulatory frameworks for emerging technologies like generative AI.
- **Panel 4:** Explored finance, data, and law, addressing cross-border securities regulation and digital governance.
- **Panel 5:** Highlighted sustainable development, discussing low-carbon transitions, renewable energy markets, and green economic growth.

- **Panel 6:** Concluded with reflections on the importance of regional collaboration and strategies for advancing legal and institutional integration.

3. Global and Regional Perspectives, Practical Applications, and Collaborative Impact

The conference seamlessly blended global and regional perspectives, leveraging Hong Kong's position as a financial and legal hub to address the GBA's unique challenges. Comparative discussions, such as lessons from the European Union's market integration, provided valuable insights into the GBA's development while highlighting the importance of aligning local strategies with global standards.

A defining feature of the conference was its focus on practical applications. Concrete policy recommendations were presented on vital topics, including legal harmonization, generative AI regulation, cross-border data governance, and institutional convergence. These actionable insights bridged the gap between theoretical exploration and real-world implementation, offering governments and businesses clear pathways for progress.

The partnership between the Centre for Chinese and Comparative Law (CCCL) and the Guangzhou Institute of the Greater Bay Area (GIG) played a crucial role in fostering a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach. By integrating legal, economic, and technological perspectives, the conference addressed the GBA's challenges holistically, ensuring a balanced and forward-thinking dialogue.

In addition, the event provided a vital platform for networking and collaboration. Strong connections were established among academics, policymakers, and practitioners, fostering partnerships for future initiatives. The second conference, scheduled for 2025 in Guangzhou, will build on these relationships, ensuring sustained progress in addressing the GBA's legal and institutional integration.

Collaborative Synergies

The collaboration between CCCL, CityUHK, and GIG was pivotal to the success of the **International Conference on Legal and Institutional Cooperation in the Greater Bay Area**. By uniting CCCL's academic rigor with the GIG's regional expertise, the event achieved a well-rounded approach to addressing both the theoretical and practical dimensions of legal and institutional cooperation in the GBA.

1. **Knowledge Exchange:** The partnership facilitated a dynamic exchange of ideas, showcasing CCCL's strengths in comparative legal studies and CityUHK's commitment to interdisciplinary research. These contributions were complemented by the GIG's in-depth understanding of the GBA's governance and economic structures, ensuring that the discussions were both insightful and actionable.
2. **Global Reputation of CityUHK and CCCL:** The conference reinforced the global brand of CityUHK and CCCL as leaders in advancing innovative legal research and fostering cross-border collaboration. CityUHK's position as a premier academic institution in Asia, coupled with CCCL's expertise in Chinese and comparative law, highlighted their ability to address pressing regional and international challenges.
3. **Thought Leadership:** The conference further solidified CCCL's and CityUHK's reputations as thought leaders in promoting legal harmonization and institutional integration. Their ability to convene leading scholars, policymakers, and practitioners underscored their pivotal role in shaping the discourse on the GBA's development.
4. **Multi-Stakeholder Engagement:** The event emphasized CityUHK's and CCCL's commitment to bridging academia, policy, and practice by fostering dialogue among diverse stakeholders, including academics, legal practitioners, policymakers, and business leaders. This approach reflected their dedication to creating meaningful impact beyond academia.

International and Regional Impact

The conference had a profound impact on the Greater Bay Area's (GBA) ongoing development, contributing significantly to its vision of becoming a seamless economic and legal zone. Its outcomes are expected to influence policymaking, particularly in critical areas such as legislative harmonization, cross-border dispute resolution, and market integration. Recommendations for developing multi-level coordination mechanisms and unified legal frameworks have the potential to address existing disparities between Hong Kong, Macau, and Guangdong, thereby facilitating smoother economic and legal cooperation across the region.

The event also made notable contributions to academic advancement by stimulating further research on pivotal issues such as trade secret harmonization, generative AI regulation, and the role of financial law courts in cross-border activities. The academic papers and insights

generated during the conference are anticipated to be published in leading journals, enriching the scholarly discourse on regional legal and economic integration while solidifying the GBA's standing as a hub for academic excellence.

Discussions at the conference also provided actionable strategies for economic integration, inspired by models such as the European Union's common market. These insights are expected to enhance the GBA's competitiveness as a unified economic zone. Panels addressing cross-border trade, venture capital, and the digital economy emphasized the region's potential to emerge as a global leader in innovation and commerce. Such discussions highlighted the transformative role that market integration can play in solidifying the GBA as a powerhouse for technological and economic growth.

The conference further strengthened networks among academics, policymakers, and practitioners, fostering connections that will drive future collaboration. These partnerships are expected to shape the region's trajectory toward greater integration and innovation. The planned second conference in Guangzhou in the summer of 2025 is set to build on the networks and momentum generated, ensuring that the discourse and initiatives spearheaded by this event continue to evolve and expand.

Moreover, the conference underscored the GBA's global relevance by positioning it as a model for regional integration. The discussions provided valuable lessons for other cross-border economic zones worldwide, showcasing the GBA's ability to address global challenges such as trade protectionism and geopolitical tensions through innovation and cooperation. By tackling these pressing issues, the event highlighted the GBA's role as a key player in shaping the future of regional and international collaboration. The conference ultimately reinforced the GBA's influence on the global stage, cementing its position as a beacon for economic modernization and legal integration.

Research Outcome

A significant academic outcome of the **International Conference on Legal and Institutional Cooperation in the Greater Bay Area** is the planned publication of selected papers presented during the conference series. These papers will undergo a rigorous review process and will be published in the **Asia Pacific Law Review**.

This commitment to publishing the conference papers not only amplifies the academic impact of the event but also ensures its practical relevance. The selected works will provide policymakers, legal practitioners, and academics with actionable insights to address the complex legal and institutional challenges within the Greater Bay Area.

By serving as a platform for disseminating high-quality research, the **Asia Pacific Law Review** will contribute to advancing scholarly discussions and promoting informed decision-making in the region. These publications will further solidify the conference's legacy as a critical resource for fostering legal harmonization and institutional integration in the GBA.

Conclusion

The **International Conference on Legal and Institutional Cooperation in the Greater Bay Area** successfully fulfilled its mission of fostering dialogue and collaboration on legal harmonization within the GBA. By uniting distinguished scholars, policymakers, and practitioners, the event not only contributed to the academic study of Chinese and comparative law but also provided practical insights to advance the GBA's vision of seamless economic integration. The collaboration between CCCL and GIG exemplified the power of interdisciplinary and cross-border partnerships in addressing complex legal and institutional challenges.

As the GBA continues to develop, the outcomes of this conference will undoubtedly play a vital role in shaping its legal and institutional landscape, ensuring a robust foundation for sustainable growth and innovation in the region.