

PARIS PEACE FORUM 2020

Selection of the Asian Business Law Institute's Data Privacy Project

The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon
Supreme Court of Singapore

1. When the Paris Peace Forum was inaugurated in 2018 with the aim of promoting collective action for world peace, no one could have predicted that, just two years later, the world would be plunged into the throes of a deadly, global pandemic. In the space of weeks, the pandemic paralysed air travel and forced the shutdown of large swathes of the global economy. Now, almost a year on, the crisis is still unfolding, but it already stands as a sobering reminder of the depth of our interdependence and interconnectedness. The pandemic has shown us that, as a global community, when faced with common challenges, we will only be as resilient as our least resilient member. We therefore cannot hope to address common threats except by pulling together, as one. Now, more than ever, the world needs *more* cooperation and collaboration, not *less*. The Paris Peace Forum embodies that ethos, and serves as an essential platform for advancing coordinated, collective action on the issues which have the potential to affect us all.

2. The Asian Business Law Institute was founded on these same values. Next January marks five years since the Institute was set up with the mission of promoting regional economic integration through the harmonisation of the

patchwork of different business laws found in Asia. To that end, the Institute's portfolio of projects is focused on promoting the *convergence* of laws in a variety of areas, such as laws on business restructuring, and on the recognition and enforcement of judgments across borders.

3. Another such project, the Institute's Data Privacy Project, which promotes the convergence of data privacy and data protection frameworks in the region, will be showcased at this year's Forum. This project, which has been five years in the making, has proven timely. Maintaining the smooth and secure flow of personal data across borders has never been more critical given that remote means of communicating and transacting will certainly be integral aspects of the 'new normal' in light of the limited scope for physical forms of interaction. On behalf of the ABLI Board of Governors and our team of researchers and staff, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present this important undertaking at this Forum.

4. Of course, such projects cannot be undertaken alone. None of this would have been possible without the support of our network of benefactors and partners from both the public and private sectors, to whom we owe a deep debt of gratitude. The ABLI is a not-for-profit organisation, and our benefactors and partners are key to the sustainability of the ABLI, the reach of its projects, and the pace at which it can progress its objectives. Let me conclude by inviting you to join us as we carry on the unending – but immensely gratifying – work of

identifying and breaking down barriers to integration in Asia, and, indeed, the world.

5. I wish you all an engaging and fruitful Forum.

6. Thank you.