



School of Law

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RCCL Online Workshop: “COVID-19, International Law and the Post-Pandemic International Order” (22 May 2020)

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The novel coronavirus, officially known as COVID-19, which first broke out in China’s Wuhan in early 2020, and soon after that was also found in other countries and spreading quickly; in some countries there were also large-scale outbreak. The disease eventually developed into a global pandemic.

While all the countries are still busy with fighting the pandemic, the United States (US) initiated the tide of “holding China accountable for the pandemic”. Several attempts have been made in the US to hold China accountable under domestic law and international law. Besides, the development of the COVID-19 pandemic has also led to great concerns and heated debate in the world over the relevant international law and international relations issues.

Against this background, the Centre for Chinese and Comparative Law (RCCL) of the School of Law, City University of Hong Kong held a closed-door workshop entitled “COVID-19, International Law and the Post-Pandemic International Order” on 22 May 2020 and brought together 24 distinguished international law and international relations scholars from Hong Kong, mainland China and overseas to discuss the international law issues concerning COVID-19, including, in particular, state responsibility in public health crisis, state sovereignty immunity, international organizations and global governance, great power diplomacy, state governance and international politics, international trade and investment, and the impact of the pandemic on international order, etc.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic was not yet fully under control and thus holding physical conference became impossible, this Workshop was conducted online instead, and this also marked the forerunner of RCCL’s online activities.

The Workshop was kicked off by the welcome speech of School of Law Dean Prof. Tan Cheng Han. After that, RCCL Director Prof. Wang Jiangyu introduced the background and the aim of this Workshop.



Dean of School of Law Prof. Tan Cheng Han (first from the right) delivered the welcoming remarks; RCCL Director Prof. Wang Jiangyu (second from right) introduced the background and the aim of the Workshop.

The Workshop was divided into five panels. Panel One discussed the impact of COVID-19 on Sino-US relations, especially the challenge of the attempt to “hold China accountable for the pandemic” as initiated by the US on China’s foreign relations. Panel Two examined international relations and international order issues arisen from COVID-19. Panels Three and Four explored issues relating to the COVID-19 related lawsuits initiated by foreign countries against China, including the possible approach, the issue of state responsibility, the principle of sovereign immunity, and international cooperation mechanisms, etc. The last panel of the Workshop analyzed the challenge brought about by COVID-19 to the world and its impact on the future of international law and international organizations.

Speakers took turn to make insightful presentations on the five sub-themes, and many of the presentations were thought-provoking. During the Q & A sessions, participants actively commented on the presentations and put forward acute questions to the speakers.

The Workshop was ended with the closing remarks of Prof. Wang Jiangyu who once again expressed his gratitude to all the participants for joining this event.

While the inherent technical restrictions of online conference made opinion exchange not as convenient as that in physical conference, thus making many speakers having a feeling of not able to thoroughly express their views and exchange opinions with each other; notwithstanding that, however, the Workshop was a great success for it has collected a lot of valuable opinions of experts and scholars of the relevant field and laid a concrete foundation for more in-depth discussion of the same topics in the future.

