



# **Hong Kong Derivatives**

## **Law and Practice**

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## Law and Practice

## Preface

Derivatives have always played an important role in any financial centre, but are especially important in Hong Kong given Hong Kong's role as a key financial hub in Asia. With a culture of innovation and entrepreneurialism, Hong Kong has always served well as the launching pad for innovative new derivative products in the local, as well as the wider Asia Pacific markets.

When the idea for this book was first conceived in 2006, derivatives did not enjoy the same level of public attention as they do now. However, the tumultuous events of 2008, beginning with the collapse of Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc and culminating in the global financial crisis, have thrown these products very much into the spotlight. Though derivative products will continue to play a key role in our financial markets, recent events have made market participants more aware of the critical need to understand and manage the risks of entering into such products. Hopefully, this is something that this book can help address.

The current interest in derivatives has made this book timely, but has also made the job of writing it more challenging. As we write, certain legal fundamentals in relation to derivative products (and, in particular, the regulatory framework) are going through a process of evolution and reassessment. In many major jurisdictions such as the United States and the European Union, sweeping changes are underway, including the creation of regulatory bodies specifically tasked with regulating derivatives, the requirement for over-the-counter derivatives to be 'standardised' and cleared through central clearing counterparties, the imposition of higher regulatory capital for entities that enter into derivatives and many more. Although the main arenas for such debate have largely been outside Hong Kong, as a key player in the world economy, Hong Kong is very much influenced by events in other major financial centres and these events are likely to have an impact in the local and regional markets.

The most significant repercussion of the global financial crisis in Hong Kong has been the Lehman Minibonds incident and its disastrous impact on investors in retail structured products. This has spurred reform as to the authorization framework for retail structured products and has also sped up efforts to harmonise the different pieces of legislation that exist in this area. This process is underway and will continue over the next few years. We have attempted to reflect as many of these potential changes as possible.

years. We have attempted to reflect as many of these potential changes as possible.

In terms of organisation, this book is divided into two parts.

Part 1 (Chapters 1 to 9) has as its focus certain core areas of Hong Kong law that are of fundamental importance to derivatives. In fact, there is no one single body of law known as ‘derivatives law’; rather, this area of law straddles across corporate law (capacity and authority in Chapter 2), regulatory and securities law (licensing and marketing restrictions in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 respectively), insolvency law (netting and collateral in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 respectively), commercial law (collateral in Chapter 6), tax law (taxation in Chapter 7), conflicts of law (governing law and enforcement of judgment in Chapter 8), as well as intellectual property law (Chapter 9). Whilst many of these core concepts are well established, readers will find that they may apply differently to derivative products. In addition, we hope that readers will also find these discussions generally helpful in the context of conducting other financial transactions under Hong Kong law.

Part 2 (Chapters 10 to 15) looks at specific types of derivative products by providing an explanation of how these products work and a detailed discussion on particular legal and regulatory issues that apply. These specific derivative products include currency, interest rate and bond derivatives (Chapter 10), equity derivatives (Chapter 11), credit derivatives (Chapter 12), commodity derivatives (Chapter 13), retail structured products (Chapter 14) and repos and stock loans (Chapter 15). As practitioners in Hong Kong frequently have to deal with derivatives products in a regional context (and not just the Hong Kong markets), Part 2 also looks at key issues that have arisen in relation to these specific derivative products in the Asia Pacific region. It is not our objective to cover the documentation aspects of these specific derivative products in detail given that they are not specific to Hong Kong or the Asia Pacific region and have been extensively discussed elsewhere (most notably in Simon Firth’s erudite and comprehensive work, *Derivatives, Law and Practice*, Looseleaf, Sweet & Maxwell 2009). However, to the extent appropriate, we have endeavoured to give an overview of the basic documentation framework of these specific derivative products solely to aid a general understanding of these products.

Appendix 1 is a glossary of terms used throughout the book that specifically relate to derivatives. Appendix 2 provides an introduction to derivatives which may be a useful guide to those practitioners or students who are foraying into derivatives and structured products for the first time. The 1992 and 2002 ISDA Master Agreements, which have been reproduced in Appendix 3, are the market-standard documents for derivative transactions worldwide.

The law and practice is as stated at 31st December 2009. We have unfortunately not been able to consider developments after this date.

We hope that this book will benefit derivatives practitioners who would like to know more about issues particular to Hong Kong and the Asia Pacific region. It is also hoped that this book will be of use to legal practitioners in other areas who wish to have an insight into derivatives-related issues and also to law students of financial law related subjects.

We would not have been able to write this text without the generous help of a number of friends and colleagues at Linklaters as well as outside the firm. We are especially grateful to Joseph Chow, Karen Yung, Aditya Mehta, Kenneth Lee and Marcus Au Yeung who provided invaluable input throughout this project helping us produce and refine our work. We also thank Karen Lam, Monica Chiu, Maggie Tsui, Calvin Chan, Koo Tin Yan, Julie van Nuffel, Susanna Wong, Akash Mohapatra, Rhian Roberts, Victor Wan, Christine Wong, Andrew Malcolm and Toby Gray for reviewing the manuscripts and sharing their views with us. There are also many friends, colleagues and clients out there (too many to list) who have helped shape or otherwise inspired our thinking and approach to this subject to whom we owe gratitude. That said, any errors and omissions are our sole responsibility.

Lastly, this endeavour would not have been possible without the support and understanding of our respective families, namely May, Ellen and Megan, in the case of Chong, and Simon, Thomas and Christopher, in the case of I-Ping, to whom we dedicate this book.

Chin-Chong Liew and I-Ping Soong  
Hong Kong  
January 2010

## About the Authors

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**I-Ping Soong** is a senior solicitor in the Derivatives and Structured Products Group at Linklaters in Hong Kong. I-Ping specialises in over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives, as well as in a wide range of regulatory and advisory matters relating to derivatives and structured products. She has over 12 years extensive experience in a full range of derivatives and structured products in the region and her more recent engagements include advice on Minibonds-related matters, issues thrown out by the insolvency of Lehman Brothers, close-out netting and collateral issues, as well as on clearing derivatives through central clearing systems. She is qualified in England and Wales and Hong Kong and is also Adjunct Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, the University of Hong Kong.

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