

Secretary for Justice, Chairman of the Bar, President of the Law Society, fellow judges, ladies and gentlemen,

I extend a warm welcome to all of you on the occasion of the call to the Inner Bar of Mr Abraham Chan, on a day coinciding with the 96th birthday of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh and the very day in 1840 when Queen Victoria married Prince Albert. This is the first time since the rank of Senior Counsel was introduced in 1997 that only one barrister has been accorded this honour. On behalf of the Judiciary, I congratulate Mr Chan on his elevation to the rank of Senior Counsel.

Those present in this court are all family and friends of Mr Chan and it is right to congratulate them warmly as well. I am sure you will all be acknowledged presently, but I would like to be the first to say that without your support and love, Mr Chan would not be able to accomplish all that he has achieved so far, and to continue from his success here. I wish to mention specially Abraham's wife, Veronica, their children and also Mr Chan's parents, all of whom are present this morning.

I started practice as a barrister in Hong Kong in 1980. In the Hong Kong Bar Association's 50th Anniversary book, in the Chapter "The Golden Age" by Corinne Remedios and Mohan Bharwaney, it was part of the 1980s: "Life at the Bar was exciting because the Bar was comprised of colourful characters like Albert Sanguinetti and, as skeleton arguments had not yet been invented, advocacy was in its heyday: Charles Ching, Henry Litton and Patrick Yu, to name a few, were a joy for the budding barrister to watch and learn from. The 'buds' were 'baby' barristers like Audrey Eu, Joe Fok, Lawrence Lok and Geoffrey Ma." Time may have passed extremely quickly but it is still a shock to the system to realise that Mr Chan was only 2 years old when I started my career and in secondary school when I took silk myself in 1993.

Even within my career in the law, there have been many changes, some of a fundamental nature. Far from a parochial or insular view of the responsibility of lawyers in former times when all that the Bar and the barristers within it concentrated on were only to do with the practice of law and their own interests, the responsibilities of all lawyers now take on a broader, community dimension. Thus, the participation in international activities has become important. This consists most relevantly not in what I call networking conferences, but in establishing genuine dialogues with

overseas legal jurisdictions, either to reinforce existing relationships, such as with other Common Law jurisdictions, or to learn from systems that appear quite different to our own.

Domestically, I have long advocated the responsibility of all lawyers that is owed to the community in properly informing it of issues relating to the law in Hong Kong. It is perhaps not surprising that members of the public have, particularly in recent years, been given at times confusing views regarding the state of the law and how the legal system operates. It is in these circumstances that the Bar has spoken out in defence of the Hong Kong legal system by explaining to the public the importance of the rule of law in Hong Kong. Both the Bar Association and individual barristers have spoken out and I have no doubt will continue to do so. This ought not be a matter of any controversy at all, because the fundamentals of our legal system are contained in the Basic Law itself. Yet it is still important for the public to be properly informed as to these issues.

The importance of all this cannot really be understated. Public confidence in the courts and in the practice of law is essential to any community which has the rule of law. And public confidence comes about through being fully informed of relevant matters.

Mr Abraham Chan has always had this wider community-based role in mind, and I look forward eagerly in anticipation to his increased participation in this role as Senior Counsel. He has for a long time been involved in helping junior barristers and law students launch their legal careers, and recognises that just as others have made much effort and given up much time to help him when he was starting at the Bar, so he must now as a senior barrister do the same to perpetuate the finest traditions of the Bar. The fine traditions of the Bar live on in the personalities of its members, past, present and future. Mr Chan is one of them.

Apart from completing the requisite year's pupillage in Hong Kong, Abraham also undertook six months' pupillage at Brick Court Chambers in London. These are the Chambers of well known judges, past and present: Lord Devlin, Lord Pearson, Lord Hope of Craighead, Lord Sumption among many others. Two of its members and a former pupil there - Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers, Lord Hoffmann and Lord Reed - are now non-permanent judges of the Court of Final Appeal. Mr Chan's pupilmasters in Hong Kong were Madam Justice Lisa Wong, Mr Justice Godfrey Lam, Mr Paul Shieh, SC, and Mr Osmond Lam. Mr Chan was also a Bar Scholar. He has an

impressive pedigree indeed and much to live up to. I believe he will.

Much of Mr Chan's practice is devoted to public law. He has had a stellar career so far and this will continue. I have no doubt he will be a tremendous success as a Senior Counsel. Everyone wishes him the very best. Once again, I congratulate Mr Chan, his family and friends.

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