

# Secretary General's Report

This is my second annual report and I am excited to be able to share some thoughts about the work of The Law Society Secretariat over the past year.

Before I joined The Law Society, I worked in law firms and corporations. In both set-ups, performance could easily be measured by, among others, billings, company profits and share prices. However, with The Law Society Secretariat, we have none of these. How do we measure our performance?

The main role of the Secretariat is to ensure that the policies decided by the Council and the initiatives engineered by the Standing Committees and committees are effectively and efficiently implemented. I hold the highest respect for our Council Members and all members who assist in different ways in the work of The Law Society. They selflessly volunteer their precious time, readily offer their invaluable expertise and generously share their wealth of experience to contribute to the benefit of the profession. The Secretariat is tasked with the important responsibility of providing members with the comfort that their commendable work at The Law Society will enjoy the necessary support, and will be properly followed up and smoothly implemented in the most effective and efficient manner.

As the Secretary General, to ensure fulfilment of the Secretariat's role with the highest standards, I have two priorities. The first is to ensure a smooth internal operation that enables maximum utilisation of our precious resources. This is particularly important in view of the increasing growth in the scale of our operation and the level of the complexity of work.

When I joined The Law Society in 2001, we had about 5,400 members and around 730 foreign lawyers. The operation was supported then by 65 staff under five departments at the Secretariat serving 51 committees. At the end of December 2012, there were over 8,500 members, an increase of nearly 160%, and about 1,400 foreign lawyers, which almost doubled the number back in 2001. The 2001 Law Society Annual Report contained 87 pages. This 2012 Annual Report exceeds 200 pages.

The Law Society has been increasingly active in reaching out to its members as well as to the public and promoting the interest of the profession within the local community and in the international arena. We also maintain regular communication on matters of common interest with the Government, the Legislative Council, the Judiciary, local and overseas professional bodies and many other organisations. In 2012, we made 35 submissions to relevant authorities on public consultations and matters of concern to the legal profession, administered members' participation in over 60 sports and recreation activities as well as many other social functions and conducted around 474 continuing professional development and risk management courses. On the regulatory side, we handled 976 complaints on professional misconduct against practitioners and employees of law firms, referred eight cases to the Convenor of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal and administered four interventions into sole proprietorships during the past year.

Faced with the growing pressure from a substantial increase in the volume and complexity of work, my first priority is to ensure that the Secretariat maintains a smooth internal operation within an environment where staff can function as a team to serve the profession in their best form.

We now have a headcount of 92 staff under six departments, serving over 110 committees. The staff turnover rate in 2012 was 27% (compared to 21% in 2011). Personnel movement is inevitable, but we have made sure that vacancies are filled with suitable and able candidates as soon as practicable. We are very fortunate to have a stable senior management team with no personnel change to directorate grade and above during the year. For the Department of Practitioners Affairs, I am pleased to welcome Mr Edwin Lee and Mr Kenneth Fok who joined our big family both as Assistant Director, Practitioners Affairs in June and November respectively.

## Secretary General's Report

With over 110 committees covering different aspects of the work of The Law Society as at the end of 2012, overlap of work among various departments that serve the committees is unavoidable. My focus has been to facilitate clearer delineation of duties and to match staff strength with the assigned tasks so as to avoid duplication of efforts and wastage of resources. The Council has also formed a Working Party to resolve overlaps in the terms of reference at the committee level to streamline the operation.

My second priority is to ensure the provision of top quality support to our Council, committees and general members. Through the promotion and cultivation of an open corporate culture of *excellence, transparency, empathy and fairness*, I aim to heighten our staff's awareness of the importance of these guiding values in our work. I believe that a self initiated urge to embrace these values and to perform well will make a world of difference to the quality of work.

I hope members have felt our enthusiasm to excel in the various projects and functions that we organised during the year. The Secretariat took over the responsibility of organising all the logistics — the hospitality programme for guests attending the *Opening Ceremony of the Legal Year 2012*, *Cross Strait Three Regions Young Lawyers Forum*, *Path Builder Mentorship Programme*, community talks under the *Mental Health Programme* and the *Law and New Generation Programme*, *Legal Advice Helpline* under *Law Week*, *Teen Talk*, the *In-House Lawyers Conference*, *Members' Christmas Party* and many others took place one after the other and have all been well received. It is also worth noting that we had the honour of hosting the 2012 Annual Conference of International Institute of Law Association Chief Executives ("IILACE") in October. It was a valuable opportunity to promote our Hong Kong brand and to showcase our hospitality and passion for excellence to our international counterparts from around the world. Judging from the feedback, I am glad to report that the 2012 IILACE Conference had been a huge success.

On this positive note, I look forward to sharing with you again in our next Annual Report on how we strive to continue perfecting the quality and increasing the relevance of our services to members. I thank the Council for its strong guidance, all members for their generous support and every colleague at the Secretariat for their dedication and commitment to the work of The Law Society in 2012.

**Heidi K. P. Chu**  
*Secretary General*

