

Address by Mr C M CHAN
President of the Law Society of Hong Kong
Admission of Senior Counsel
11 June 2022

Chief Justice, Honorable Judges, Secretary for Justice, Chairman of the Bar, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be here today to attend this ceremony on formal appointment of those of you taking silk and receiving the rank of Senior Counsel.

The appointment of a barrister as a senior counsel has informally been known as ‘taking silk’. Those in the profession certainly would know what it means, but to laymen, it may not always be understood or appreciated. The expression here is of course an honorific expression which could be referenced to those early days as to how Queen’s Counsels were dressed or robed in the United Kingdom. It has been a tradition that, as those members who are appointed Queen’s Counsels wear silk gowns of a particular design, appointment as Queen’s Counsel is known informally as receiving, obtaining, or taking silk. And Queen’s Counsels are often colloquially called silks. This tradition was followed locally.

Speaking on tradition, the legal profession of Hong Kong enjoys a long tradition, or history. For the Law Society of Hong Kong, indeed, this year marks her 115th anniversary. If you count, 115 years back was the year of 1907. 1907 was when the Guangxu Emperor (光緒皇帝) of the Qing Dynasty was still on his throne. Starting with only 7 subscribers since its incorporation in 1907, the Law Society has now grown into a professional association with jurisdiction over around 12,000 solicitor-members, 1,500 registered foreign lawyers from 33 jurisdictions, 1,000 local and foreign law firms in Hong Kong and 16,000 non-qualified employees engaged within those law firms. I am proud of this development.

This *tradition* of appointing silk continues under the “One Country, Two Systems” regime. Our elite legal professionals are the key contributors in building the city’s reputation of excellence.

I congratulate those of you who are here today to receive the silk. The appointment signifies highest confidence in your abilities as advocates and as lawyers, in protecting the lawful rights of clients and in facilitating access to justice.

We have five appointees today. They are Ms. Mairéad Mary Rattigan, Mr. Johnny Ma Ka-chun, Ms. Sara Tong See-pui, Mr. Tony Li Chung-yin and Mr. Victor Howard Joffe.

Ms. Rattigan is a leading family and matrimonial specialist counsel in Hong Kong. She has appeared in numerous reported cases across a broad spectrum of family matters from Children's Proceedings to complex financial and multijurisdictional disputes. She also regularly advises and acts for trustees and other third parties in such disputes. She has given expert opinions on Hong Kong family law in proceedings in various overseas jurisdictions and is a contributing author of a practitioners' text on family law.

Mr. Johnny Ma has a broad civil and commercial practice, but he might be more well-known for his focus on judicial review matters, as in recent years Mr Ma appeared in a number of cases that involved complicated constitutional rights and legal issues with great general or public importance.

Ms. Sara Tong's practice comprises a broad spectrum of civil and commercial disputes. She has been instructed as advocate for a wide range of individuals and institutions at all levels of court in Hong Kong, as well as various specialist and disciplinary tribunals. Ms Tong also appears as counsel in arbitrations and sits as arbitrator in commercial disputes.

Mr. Tony Li specializes in criminal law and regulatory offences. He is instructed to defend cases ranging from white-collar and complex

commercial frauds, insider dealing and market manipulation, bribery and corruption, and money laundering offences.

The practice of Mr. Victor Howard Joffe encompasses different aspects of company law, commercial law, and trusts. He has extensive experience in injunctions and other interlocutory applications, and is the author of a practitioners' text on minority shareholders. Mr. Joffe has practised for a number of years in the United Kingdom before among others commencing full time practice at the Hong Kong Bar in 2011. Since then he has appeared regularly in the Hong Kong Courts at both first instance and appellate level.

I am pleased to note the diversity in the areas of practices of the appointees. In England, solicitors could take silk more than 25 years ago. I hope it would not take too long for eligible solicitors in Hong Kong SAR to have the same opportunity to be accorded the status of Senior Counsel. This will help enrich the silkset for administration of justice and widen the choice for the public.

Let me conclude by congratulating all of you again. The title of Senior Counsel is not just a title that befits respect. It also signifies the esteem in which you are held. I wish all those who are appointed today every continued success for the future.

June 2022