

**69<sup>th</sup> UIA Congress in Guadalajara, Mexico**  
**International Bar Leaders' Senate, Part I Session 1**  
**30 October 2025 (2:00pm – 3:30pm)**

**“The Role of Bar Associations in Protecting the Rule of Law  
and the Independence of the Judiciary”**

**Speech by Mr. Roden Tong**  
**President of The Law Society of Hong Kong**

1. Good afternoon, distinguished guests, fellow speakers, ladies and gentlemen.
2. In this room, we represent a tapestry of legal traditions, but I believe our shared identity as lawyers has brought us together to confront a common challenge: the rise of narratives that seek to undermine public trust in our legal system.
3. Today, this challenge is amplified by the prevalent use of social media and the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI), which are at times weaponized to spread disinformation and launch unfounded attacks against the judiciary and the legal profession.
4. In this climate, we must ask ourselves: What is our role as a bar association; and what concrete measures can we adopt to defend the integrity of our legal system?
5. As the President of The Law Society of Hong Kong, I see this as a fundamental part of our mandate.
6. Representing over 13,000 members and 900 law firms, the Law Society is entrusted with the statutory duty to monitor the conduct of law firms and lawyers to maintain the highest professional standards.
7. Lawyers have a pivotal role in the administration of justice, and the public looks to lawyers to fulfil this role. It is a role which demands a blend of competence, proper conduct and professional ethics.
8. Although the challenge is tremendous, as bar associations, we have a responsibility to speak the truth and take proactive steps to combat disinformation that targets the legal system.

9. First, we must be a clear and principled voice for the judiciary.
10. In Hong Kong, similar to some other places, we have seen attempts to pressure the judiciary through calls for sanctions against prosecutors and judges. These calls were not based on a reasoned analysis of the judgments, but on a disagreement with the outcome. Critiques are at times launched without the courtesy of reading the judgment itself, and are merely driven by sentiment and a deliberate agenda to construct a narrative of a weakened rule of law that does not reflect the reality.
11. As solicitors, we are officers of the court. We are bound to uphold the integrity of the profession and the rule of law. When the judiciary faces unfounded criticism, it is our professional duty to speak out in its defence based on facts and legal principles. These could be achieved through public education and use of social media platforms.
12. Defense against disinformation begins with an informed public. This comes to my second point, that we must leverage our profession's influence through public education. A public that understands how the legal system works is a public that is resistant to disinformation. As bar associations, we have a responsibility to demystify the law, explain legal outcomes from a professional standpoint, and correct misconceptions about our legal system.
13. Third, as the saying goes, "fight fire with fire". We are embracing social media and AI not only as challenges, but also as opportunities. We should utilize these technological advancements to deliver accurate and truthful messages directly to the public, countering fake news, misleading statements, and unjust criticism that seek to obscure the truth.
14. Fourth, and fundamentally, we must demonstrate unwavering professionalism. The trust of all our stakeholders, including the public, is earned through the quality of the profession's service and conduct.
15. In Hong Kong, solicitors are guided and regulated by "The Hong Kong Solicitors' Guide to Professional Conduct", a publication which sets out the standards that all solicitors are expected to achieve and adopt in practice as minimum requirements of professional conduct.

16. Through the collective efforts of the entire profession, and by consistently demonstrating our integrity and professionalism, we foster reliability and confidence in the legal system, thereby minimizing the opportunity for misguided or deliberate attacks.
17. Fifth, to uphold the rule of law, the actions of a bar association must be grounded on an impartial and transparent system and mechanism.
18. The Law Society of Hong Kong is an independent, apolitical and self-regulatory body. For instance, when public complaints regarding a solicitor's conduct are received, The Law Society of Hong Kong would refer the matter to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal. The members of this Tribunal are appointed by the Chief Justice, and the Tribunal operates independently from the Law Society of Hong Kong, with appeal mechanism in place.
19. The disciplinary process is designed to protect the public, maintain the reputation of the profession, and maintain public confidence in the administration of justice.
20. Last but not least, I wish to highlight that the Basic Law, which is Hong Kong's constitutional document, guarantees the continuation of the common law system in Hong Kong. It also provides constitutional protection for judicial independence and fundamental human rights and freedoms, including the freedom of speech. Nonetheless, just as the case with other places in the world, such rights and freedoms are not absolute.
21. In concluding, allow me to quote the words of the Honourable Mr Geoffrey Ma, the former Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal in Hong Kong, spoken in 2020. I find his words as relevant today as they were then. He said:

“Where fundamental principles have been breached on the part of judges or the courts, criticisms can of course justifiably be made. But it is crucial that such criticisms are both informed and supported with proper grounds and reasons.”
22. Let us stand united in our efforts to protect the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, both in our jurisdictions and across the globe to ensure that justice remains not just an ideal, but a reality for all.
23. Thank you.