

OPENING REMARKS OF MR. RODEN TONG
PRESIDENT OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF HONG KONG
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE FOREIGN-RELATED LAWYERS
TRAINING PROGRAMME
涉外律師香港培訓班開辦禮

28 JUNE 2026

Meeting Room, 11/F, Cheng Yu Tung Tower,
Faculty of Law, The University of Hong Kong

The Honourable Deputy Secretary for Justice Dr Horace Cheung,
President Gao,
Director Liu,
Chairman of the Bar,
Distinguished guests, fellow members of the legal profession, ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

1. It is my honour and pleasure to be here today at the Opening Ceremony of this Foreign-related Lawyers Training Programme.
2. Today is also a rather special day for me personally, as it marks my 55th birthday.
3. As we grow older, birthdays become less about celebration and more about reflection. They remind us not only of the passing of time, but also of the responsibilities that come with experience. Standing here today, I am reminded of how the legal profession constantly evolves with the needs of society, and how each generation of lawyers has its own vision and mission to fulfil.
4. I therefore cannot think of a more meaningful way to spend this occasion than with a group of talented young legal professionals from the Chinese Mainland, all of whom represent the future of our country's foreign-related legal services. This gathering is not only a training programme. It is an investment in the future of the legal profession and in the future of our country's engagement with the world.

5. Today, our country is entering a new stage of high-quality development and high-level opening-up. Chinese enterprises are expanding their presence overseas. Cross-border investment, financing, trade, technology cooperation and dispute resolution are becoming increasingly sophisticated and interconnected.
6. Against this backdrop, the role of foreign-related lawyers has never been more important.
7. Foreign-related legal work is not simply about understanding foreign laws or speaking another language. It requires the ability to bridge legal systems, business cultures and regulatory expectations. It requires lawyers who can think internationally, act professionally and safeguard the legitimate interests of our country, our enterprises and our people in a global environment.
8. In this sense, foreign-related lawyers are not merely legal advisers. They are builders of trust, facilitators of cooperation and guardians of certainty in an increasingly complex world.
9. This naturally brings us to an important question: why Hong Kong?
10. I firmly believe Hong Kong has something truly distinctive to offer.
11. Under the principle of "One Country, Two Systems", Hong Kong is the only common law jurisdiction in our country. It is also the world's only bilingual common law system operating in both English and Chinese.
12. This unique position enables Hong Kong to serve as an effective bridge between China and the international community. Our common law tradition, robust legal system, bilingual legal environment, internationally connected legal profession and long-standing commitment to the rule of law enable Hong Kong to provide legal certainty, transparency and predictability in cross-border transactions and dispute resolution.
13. Hong Kong's rule of law continues to be widely respected by the international business and legal communities.
14. In the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2025, Hong Kong ranked 24th globally and remained among the world's leading jurisdictions in areas such as absence of corruption and order and security. Hong Kong also ranked second

globally in the World Competitiveness Yearbook 2026 published by the International Institute for Management Development.

15. These achievements are inseparable from a fundamental principle emphasised by President Xi Jinping: "the rule of law is the best business environment".
16. This is not merely a statement of principle. It is a practical reality. Businesses invest where rules are clear. Investors place confidence where rights are protected. Parties choose dispute resolution venues where decisions are respected and enforceable. In international commerce, the rule of law is the foundation of confidence.
17. For those of you engaged in foreign-related legal services in the Chinese Mainland, I genuinely believe that Hong Kong is an ideal place for meaningful exchange and mutual learning.
18. You bring with you a wealth of knowledge and experience, together with a deep understanding of the Mainland legal system, Chinese enterprises and our country's strategic development priorities. In return, Hong Kong stands ready to share our experience in the common law system, international dispute resolution and engagement with global markets.
19. Together, these complementary strengths create valuable opportunities for learning, collaboration and professional growth.
20. During this programme, I trust that you will not only gain knowledge, but also valuable insights, practical experience and fresh perspectives.
21. At the same time, I would encourage all of you to learn about Hong Kong beyond its legal system.
22. Take the opportunity to understand Hong Kong's culture. Understand how business is conducted in an international financial centre. Observe how lawyers, judges, clients and professionals communicate and work together in a bilingual and international environment.
23. Most importantly, engage with the people around you. Build friendships. Exchange ideas. Ask questions. These experiences are often just as valuable as what you learn in the classroom.

24. For lawyers engaged in foreign-related legal services, language is not simply a tool of communication. It is a bridge to understanding different legal traditions, business cultures and ways of thinking.
25. English remains one of the most widely used languages in international legal practice. Whether in cross-border transactions, international arbitration, overseas investments or discussions with multinational clients, the ability to communicate effectively in English is often essential.
26. Yet the real objective is not language itself. The real objective is understanding.
27. I say this because I try to do exactly the same whenever I travel to different cities across the Mainland. I always make an effort to communicate in Putonghua. My Putonghua is certainly not perfect, and I continue to learn every day. However, I have found that when we speak another person's language, we gain more than the ability to communicate. We gain insight into another culture, another perspective and another way of thinking.
28. When we make the effort to understand one another, we build trust.
29. When we build trust, we build stronger professional relationships.
30. And when we build stronger relationships, we create more opportunities for cooperation and success.
31. I hope all of you will approach this programme with the same mindset. Use your time in Hong Kong not simply to learn about Hong Kong, but to experience Hong Kong. I believe the more you understand Hong Kong, the more effectively you will engage with international clients and opportunities in the future.
32. This spirit of mutual learning is also reflected in the work of The Law Society of Hong Kong.
33. The Law Society is the statutory self-regulatory body for Hong Kong solicitors. We represent a growing membership of close to 14,000 solicitors across a wide range of practice areas and expertise.
34. One of our strengths is our extensive international network. We maintain close connections with lawyers' associations and legal organisations around the world and

have signed 55 memoranda of understanding with 52 lawyers' associations and international legal organisations across different jurisdictions.

35. Over the past two years, I have been honoured to participate in business delegations led by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR to the Middle East and Central Asia. These visits have reinforced my belief that legal professionals have an increasingly important role to play in supporting international commerce, fostering cooperation and promoting mutual understanding between jurisdictions.
36. At the same time, we must recognise that the legal profession is facing profound challenges and opportunities, particularly through the rapid development of artificial intelligence.
37. AI is already changing how legal research is conducted, how documents are reviewed, how contracts are drafted and how legal services are delivered.
38. However, while technology can improve efficiency, it cannot replace professional judgement, ethical responsibility, strategic thinking or human trust.
39. In fact, I would suggest that the more advanced technology becomes, the more important it is for lawyers to strengthen their legal knowledge, broaden their international outlook and uphold the highest professional standards.
40. The future of our profession belongs not only to those who understand the law, but also to those who can combine legal expertise, technological competence, ethical responsibility and international awareness.
41. This is precisely why programmes such as this are so valuable and timely.
42. They serve not only as professional development for individual lawyers, but also as part of a broader effort to build a strong pool of foreign-related legal talent for our country. Through cooperation between the legal professions of the Mainland and Hong Kong, we can better serve the needs of our respective jurisdictions, contribute to our country's development and enhance our engagement with the international community.
43. Before I conclude, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the All China Lawyers Association for initiating this programme with such vision and foresight.

44. I hope that when you leave Hong Kong at the end of this programme, you will take with you not only new legal knowledge, but also a broader international perspective, a deeper understanding of Hong Kong, and friendships and professional connections that will accompany you throughout your careers.

45. I am confident that many of you will become future leaders in the development of foreign-related legal services for our country, helping Chinese enterprises engage confidently with the world, while helping the world better understand China.

46. I very much look forward to welcoming you to the new office of The Law Society of Hong Kong in the coming days, where we can continue our dialogue, share experiences and learn from one another.

47. I wish this programme every success.

Thank you very much.