

**WELCOMING REMARKS OF MR RODEN TONG, BBS
PRESIDENT OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF HONG KONG
AT THE YOUNG SOLICITORS' GROUP 2026 CONNECTED
MENTORSHIP AND BUDDY SCHEME KICK-OFF EVENT
9 JULY 2026**

Good evening,

Mentors, buddies, mentees, distinguished guests, colleagues and friends,

1. It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the Law Society's new office premises for the Young Solicitors' Group 2026 CONNECTED Mentorship and Buddy Scheme Kick-off Event.
2. This evening marks the beginning of another year of a meaningful programme that has, for many years, brought together different generations of legal professionals to learn from one another, build lasting friendships and strengthen the future of our profession. I am delighted to see so many enthusiastic young solicitors and trainee solicitors here tonight, together with a distinguished group of mentors and buddies who have generously volunteered their time and experience to support the next generation.
3. Many people see becoming a solicitor as joining an elite profession. They see the qualifications, the status, the intellectual challenge and the opportunities that come with it. There is certainly some truth in that. However, after more than two decades in practice, I have come to realise that the law is something much more profound. The law is not merely a profession. It is not simply a means of earning a livelihood. It is a responsibility. It is a public trust. Indeed, it is a calling.

4. When society entrusts us with the title of solicitor, it entrusts us with something far greater than technical legal work. Clients place their confidence in us during some of the most important moments of their lives and businesses. The courts rely upon us to uphold the proper administration of justice. The public expects us to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct. Every day, whether we are advising a client, negotiating a transaction, appearing before a tribunal or serving our community, we represent not only ourselves or our firms, but also the legal profession as a whole.
5. That is why I have often said that professionalism is the cornerstone of our profession. Professional qualifications, legal knowledge and technical competence are essential, but they alone do not define a solicitor. What ultimately distinguishes a trusted lawyer is character. At the heart of that character lies integrity.
6. Integrity means doing the right thing when nobody is watching. It means remaining honest when honesty may be difficult or inconvenient. It means treating people with fairness and respect. It means accepting responsibility for our actions and standing by our professional principles even in challenging circumstances.
7. These values may sound simple, yet they form the foundation upon which public confidence in the legal profession and the rule of law ultimately rests. Trust can take years to build and only moments to lose. Once lost, it is often extraordinarily difficult to regain. For that reason, professionalism and integrity are not values that we practise only when circumstances are favourable. They must guide every decision we make throughout our careers.

8. In recent years, I have had numerous opportunities to represent the Law Society both locally and internationally. Most recently, I had the privilege of joining the Chief Executive's delegation on an official visit to Central Asia. During that visit, I met government officials, judges, legal professionals, business leaders and representatives from a wide range of jurisdictions.
9. Many of our discussions centred on Hong Kong, our legal system and our role as an international legal and dispute resolution centre. What struck me repeatedly was that while people were interested in Hong Kong's common law system and institutions, what they respected most was the professionalism, integrity and international outlook of Hong Kong lawyers.
10. Those conversations reminded me that Hong Kong's greatest asset is not simply our legal framework, our buildings or our institutions. Our greatest asset is our people. It is the professionalism of our solicitors. It is the dedication of generations of lawyers who have earned public trust through their competence, integrity and commitment to the rule of law.
11. As the only common law jurisdiction in China and the world's only English-Chinese bilingual common law jurisdiction, Hong Kong occupies a unique position. The continued success of our legal system depends not only on laws and institutions, but also on the quality of the lawyers who uphold them every day. One day, that responsibility will rest with all of you.

12. That is also why mentoring the next generation is so important. The future of our profession will not be secured by legislation alone, nor by policies, regulations or institutions. It will be secured by people. It will be secured by young lawyers who embrace the highest standards of professionalism and integrity and who understand the responsibilities that accompany this profession.
13. Many of the most important lessons I learned during my own career did not come from textbooks or examinations. They came from mentors. They came from senior practitioners who were willing to invest their time in guiding younger lawyers, sharing their experiences, offering advice and setting an example through their conduct. Looking back, I realise how fortunate I was to benefit from their wisdom and encouragement. Their influence helped shape not only the lawyer I became, but also the person I became.
14. This CONNECTED Mentorship and Buddy Scheme embodies that very spirit. It creates a platform for experienced practitioners to share their knowledge with the next generation. More importantly, it creates opportunities for meaningful relationships that extend far beyond professional development.
15. Through mentorship, we do not merely transfer knowledge. We pass on values. We pass on professional judgment. We pass on the traditions, standards and culture that have sustained our profession for generations.

16. To our mentors and buddies, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your commitment to giving back to the profession. Your willingness to support younger colleagues reflects the very best traditions of our legal community. The time you devote to this Scheme may have a lasting impact far beyond what you can see today.
17. To our mentees, I encourage you to approach this programme with enthusiasm, curiosity and humility. Be proactive. Ask questions. Seek guidance. Learn not only from your mentors' successes, but also from the challenges they have encountered and the lessons they have learned. Build relationships, build networks and build friendships. Most importantly, use this opportunity to reflect on the kind of lawyer you want to become.
18. As President of the Law Society, one of my priorities has always been nurturing the next generation of legal talent. As we approach the Law Society's 120th Anniversary next year, we are reminded that the profession we enjoy today was not built by any single individual or any single generation. It was built by countless solicitors who devoted themselves to serving their clients, contributing to society and safeguarding the rule of law. We are beneficiaries of their efforts, just as future generations will one day become beneficiaries of ours.
19. For that reason, I hope each of you will see your legal career as more than a pathway to professional success. Success is important, and there is nothing wrong with ambition. However, a fulfilling legal career is measured by more than the transactions you complete, the matters you handle or the positions you hold. Ultimately, it is measured by your character, your integrity and the positive contribution you make to the people and communities you serve.

20. The future of Hong Kong's legal profession will not be shaped by any President, Council or institution alone. It will be shaped by the values that your generation chooses to uphold. My hope is that every one of you will strive not only to become successful lawyers, but lawyers who make a difference. Lawyers who earn trust. Lawyers who lead with integrity. Lawyers who understand that the law is not merely a career, but a calling.
21. If you do that, I have every confidence that the future of Hong Kong's legal profession, and the future of Hong Kong's common law system, will be in very good hands indeed.
22. I wish all participants a rewarding and enriching experience under this year's CONNECTED Mentorship and Buddy Scheme. May the friendships formed tonight endure for many years to come, and may the guidance and inspiration you receive help shape your professional journey for years ahead.

Thank you very much, and enjoy the evening.