

Speech by CE at Vision 2030 for Rule of Law International Symposium (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the Vision 2030 for Rule of Law International Symposium today (May 26):

Commissioner Liu (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Mr Liu Guangyuan), Judge Xue (Judge of International Court of Justice, Mr Xue Hanqin), Professor Surakiart (Chairman of the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council, Professor Surakiart Sathirathai), Chief Justice (Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Andrew Cheung Kui-nung), Dr Neoh (Chairman of the Asian Academy of International Law, Dr Anthony Neoh), ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I am delighted to welcome you to the "Vision 2030 for Rule of Law International Symposium". Several hundreds of you on-site and thousands more online are taking part in this all-day gathering of senior legal and law-related professionals, government leaders and other high-profile individuals from common law, civil law and sharia law jurisdictions. You come from Hong Kong, from Mainland China and from all over the world, united by an unwavering belief in the rule of law and its primacy.

Indeed, today's Symposium has its roots in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This blueprint for achieving a more sustainable future for us all was adopted in 2015. The rule of law is among the Agenda's 17 goals, a pillar in providing universal access to justice and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Hong Kong's resolute response to the UN Agenda in this aspect was the creation of "Vision 2030 for Rule of Law" in 2020, announced in my 2020 Policy Address. This 10-year initiative is designed to promote widespread understanding and recognition of the rule of law and its importance through intensive research, collaboration and capacity building.

In less than two years' time, Vision 2030, together with a dedicated task force chaired by Ms Teresa Cheng, our Secretary for Justice, has made excellent progress, taking forward a number of projects, locally and internationally, to advance and promote the rule of law in Hong Kong, throughout the region and beyond. The results of its dedication are now available in the "Vision 2030 Task Force Report", which is officially launched at today's Symposium.

The rule of law is a core value and the cornerstone of Hong Kong's success. It underpins the economic development of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and Hong Kong's enviable way of life. The Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Andrew Cheung Kui-nung, who is with

us today, said during the Hong Kong Legal Week 2021, "Regardless of whether one subscribes to the thin or thick version of the rule of law, it can be confidently asserted that Hong Kong is a society which is governed by the rule of law". I fully agree with him. With the staunch support of the Central People's Government and the successful implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" framework, Hong Kong has come a long way as a leading international financial hub. We are, as well, the only common law jurisdiction within China. Hong Kong boasts an independent judiciary and fundamental rights and freedoms fully protected under the Basic Law. That is why Hong Kong is often the preferred choice for multinational co-operation when it comes to legal and dispute resolution services.

I am proud to say that Hong Kong is internationally recognised to be underpinned by the rule of law. According to the Rule of Law Index 2021 by the World Justice Project, Hong Kong maintained its fifth overall ranking in the East Asia and Pacific Region and 19th standing globally. Looking at a longer time horizon, according to the World Bank Group, Hong Kong's percentile rank in respect of the rule of law was only 69.85 in 1996; upon China's resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997, Hong Kong's score reached 82.5 in 1998 and, since 2003, has remained consistently above 90, clearly underscoring the significant advancement of the rule of law here since the establishment of the HKSAR in 1997. By and large, these results enunciate the recognition of the city's perseverance in upholding the rule of law.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR. We are determined that Hong Kong's solid foundation in the rule of law, and our legal system in general, will continue to grow and serve as a guiding principle for Hong Kong, and a model for the region, in the many more years to come.

My sincere thanks go to the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council and the Asian Academy of International Law for their much appreciated organisational efforts in concert with the Department of Justice. I am grateful to the Department not only for today's global gathering, but also for bringing Vision 2030 for Rule of Law and its attendant task force to bright life.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you all a rewarding conference and a prosperous and sustainable future built squarely on the rule of law. Thank you very much.

