

LC: Speech by SJ on motion on Overseas Lawyers (Qualification for Admission) (Amendment) Rules 2014 (Commencement) Notice

Following is the translation of a speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen, SC, in response to the motion moved by Hon Andrew Leung under Rule 49E(2) of the Rules of Procedure on Overseas Lawyers (Qualification for Admission) (Amendment) Rules 2014 (Commencement) Notice (L.N. 122 of 2014) in the Legislative Council meeting today (December 10):

Mr President,

The Overseas Lawyers (Qualification for Admission) (Amendment) Rules 2014 (Commencement) Notice (the Commencement Notice) was made by the President of the Law Society of Hong Kong under section 1 of the Overseas Lawyers (Qualification for Admission) (Amendment) Rules 2014 (the Amendment Rules). The aforesaid Commencement Notice appointed January 2, 2015 as the day on which the Amendment Rules shall come into operation.

With the prior approval of the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, the Amendment Rules were made by the Council of the Law Society of Hong Kong under section 73 of the Legal Practitioners Ordinance (Cap 159) to provide for relevant matters concerning the admission of overseas qualified lawyers as Hong Kong solicitors.

At the Legislative Council House Committee meeting held on October 24, 2014, Members agreed that a subcommittee should be formed to study the Commencement Notice. The Chairman of the Subcommittee on Overseas Lawyers (Qualification for Admission) (Amendment) Rules 2014 (Commencement) Notice, Hon Dennis Kwok, has just presented the deliberations of the Subcommittee to Members of this Council.

The Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region welcomes the admission of overseas lawyers who are

experienced in international legal practice and who possess high standards of professionalism as solicitors in Hong Kong to provide legal and dispute resolution services in different areas. This will help to promote and consolidate Hong Kong's status as a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia Pacific region.

I notice that Hon Dennis Kwok urged the relevant authority to put in place sufficient checks and balances for admitting overseas lawyers as solicitors in Hong Kong in order to ensure fairness and to uphold the high quality and integrity of the legal practice in Hong Kong. The Department of Justice agrees to the direction of Hon Dennis Kwok's suggestions. I believe that the representatives of the Law Society who were present at the meeting of the subcommittee would have taken note of the views of Hon Dennis Kwok. I shall also reflect the opinions expressed by Hon Dennis Kwok today to the Council of the Law Society.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Hon Dennis Kwok, the Chairman of the Subcommittee, and also the other Members of the Subcommittee for their valuable views.

I so submit. Thank you, President.

Ends/Wednesday, December 10, 2014