

Statement by the Secretary for Justice

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Following is a statement by the Secretary for Justice, Ms Elsie Leung, following the delivery of the Policy Address by the Chief Executive today (January 8):

The Chief Executive has this afternoon delivered his Policy Address and the Government has published the Policy Agenda. These are very pragmatic, solid and progressive strategic plans for Hong Kong for the next 18 months. The Department of Justice supports the Chief Executive's Policy Agenda and will co-operate with other bureaux and departments in the implementation of the Policy Agenda.

The role of the Department of Justice is to provide legal advice and legal services to the Chief Executive and the Government. However, we have an important part to play, i.e. to maintain the rule of law. How do we achieve this? It is through ensuring that legislation will comply with the Basic Law and its human rights provisions and with the rule of law. We will make sure that in conducting criminal prosecutions, we will do it fairly and efficiently. And we will give proper advice to other bureaux and departments, in particular, in respect of new initiatives. On the 25 November 2002, we attended the Administration of Justice and Legal Services Panel of the Legislative Council, and presented our Policy Objectives for 2002-03. This document is available to the public.

It is not easy for the Department of Justice to incorporate its Policy Objectives into the five themes of the Policy Agenda, but we are very much guided by them. For example, we participate in the drafting of legislation to give effect to effective governance, a caring and just society and environmentally responsible development; we are active in promoting Hong Kong as a legal services centre and in helping Hong Kong lawyers to gain entry into the Mainland market, whether through Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement or otherwise, and this contributes to the development of a vibrant economy; and our work in respect of the reform of legal education is part of the programme of education reform.

The Department of Justice supports the Government's measures in cost saving. Of course this may mean stress on our human resources and facilities in the carrying out of our work. However, we will make our best endeavours so that the effectiveness and standard of our services will not be reduced as a result of the cost

saving measures. I am quite sure that with the cooperation of all the Government Bureaux and departments, we will be able to achieve the vision and mission envisaged in the Chief Executive's Policy Address.

End/Wednesday, January 8, 2003

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