

Speech by the Secretary for Justice (Translation)

Following is a speech by Ms Elsie Leung, the Secretary for Justice, at the Reception to welcome Mr Xiao Yang, President of the Supreme People's Court, and his delegation at Government House today (November 10):

The Honourable Chief Justice Mr Xiao Yang, President of the Supreme People's Court, the Honourable Chief Justice Mr Andrew Li, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank President Xiao and all his colleagues, including Justice Lu Botao, Senior Judge Shao Wenhong, Director Liu Hehua, Senior Judge Yan Maokun, Judge Gao Shawei and Deputy Head He Jing, for sparing the time to visit Hong Kong and meet colleagues from the Judiciary and the Department of Justice, legal professionals and scholars in Hong Kong. As President Xiao and Chief Justice Li have said in their speeches, it has been more than a decade since President Xiao last visited Hong Kong, and we are glad that he and his colleagues can now visit Hong Kong in autumn, when the weather is fine and the scenery is most beautiful. President Xiao has a tight schedule for his visit. We sincerely wish President Xiao and his colleagues a fruitful and enjoyable stay in Hong Kong.

President Xiao visits Hong Kong this time not only to receive an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree conferred by the City University of Hong Kong, but also to give a very important speech on "The Judicial System and Reform in China" on Friday afternoon. To rule the country in accordance with law has long been our country's basic strategy and is a crucial factor in securing long-term peace and stability. A system not governed by law can easily be distorted. The words of government officials may then be taken as law and those officials may abuse their power. A lax enforcement of law, and a failure to take action against those who have broken the law, would mean that the rights of the people cannot be safeguarded. With the rule of law, the government's ability to govern is enhanced; the interests of people can be addressed and contradictions resolved; and the stability and harmony of society can be maintained. The legal system of China was completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. To re-establish the judicial system is an extremely difficult job. Over the years, President Xiao has remained undaunted in the face of such difficulty. He has strived to remove all obstacles and is determined to devote his efforts to strengthening China's judicial system. His achievements are

impressive and command our great admiration.

The success of "One Country, Two Systems" hinges not on building a firewall between the "Two Systems" but mutual understanding of the "Two Systems", mutual respect and non-intervention. The exchanges between the "Two Systems" in the areas of judicial and legal services enable us to learn about the Mainland's judicial system and its reform progress. We are grateful to the delegation for making this trip to Hong Kong to share the latest information with us.

Since President Xiao can only spend a few days in Hong Kong, Chief Justice Li and I have specially arranged this reception to welcome him, as well as to provide the opportunity for him to meet his old friends and make new acquaintances. I wish President Xiao and all guests a pleasant evening together.

I take this opportunity to extend my thanks especially to the Chief Justice and the Judiciary and to all government departments concerned for their full support in making this visit a success.

I would like to thank President Xiao and all the guests again for attending this reception.

Ends/Wednesday, November 10, 2004

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