

Speech of Ms Teresa Cheng, SC
Secretary for Justice
The Law Society Pro Bono and Community Service
Award Presentation Ceremony

Melissa (President of the Law Society of Hong Kong, Ms Melissa Pang), **distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to join you again at the Law Society Pro Bono and Community Service Award Presentation Ceremony. May I first express my congratulations to all awardees and my gratitude to the Law Society for the continuous effort in promoting the pro bono culture.

2. In one year, the pandemic has changed our way of life and work. Legal services whether in the form of advisory or litigation work has to adapt to the new normal.

No doubt the provision of pro-bono work is no different. Yet notwithstanding the pandemic, the number of law firms and individuals that have participated in the program is a record high. The success in these efforts must be applauded. The dedication of the law society in devising schemes and persistently encouraging participation, as well as the selflessness of the legal sector in responding to the needs of the community are the key elements that make the pro bono and community service scheme a success. It is only right that the efforts and service of you all be recognised and this award ceremony is an expression of appreciation to you all.

3. The Department of Justice (DoJ) has earlier this year established a LawTech Fund to promote more prevalent use of technology in law firms and chambers

and to address the use of video conferencing in court hearings. With the help of the Law Society and the Bar Association, around 70% of the target small and medium sized law firms and chambers have benefitted from the Fund. We have also established a COVID-19 Online Dispute Resolution Scheme to provide speedy, cost-effective means to resolve epidemic-related disputes whilst encouraging young arbitrators and mediators to serve on the scheme.

4. In November, the DoJ launched a ten-year initiative “Vision 2030 for Rule of Law”. Among others, a territory-wide Youth Empowerment Programme is introduced. I look forward to your support in the series of initiatives such that we, together, can uphold our much-cherished rule of law tradition.

5. In closing, may I congratulate all our awardees. You have set an inspiring role model for many others. I hope I am able to count on the continuing public-private partnership with you in promoting the pro bono culture and ultimately advancing the objective of “Rule of Law and Justice for All”. Thank you.