

## **Ceremony for Admission of New Silks – 11 May 2024**

### **Speech by Chairman of the Bar**

Chief Justice, Secretary for Justice, President of the Law Society, judges, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

1. On behalf of the Bar, we would like to extend to you, Benson, Frances and Queenie our sincere and warmest congratulations on your appointment as Senior Counsel.
2. One of the features of this year's appointment is that for the first time in our history, the only men who will be called to the Inner Bar is outnumbered by her female colleagues. The new appointments bring the total number of our practicing female silk to 16.
3. The appointment of Frances and Queenie also makes today a fitting occasion to pay tribute to the contribution of women in the administration of justice in Hong Kong and the role played by them in the Hong Kong Bar. Since Jacqueline Leong and Gladys Li were appointed in 1990, a total 22 ladies were called to the Inner Bar. In addition to Jackie and Gladys, Audrey Eu and Winnie Tam also went on to Chair the Bar Association. On this

front, I must say we have done much better than our friends in the Law Society.

4. I will not be forgiven if I am to omit the contribution of the many female judges and judicial officers who we appear in front of regularly in almost all level of our Courts. A number of our female judges in the High Court will be retiring in the next few months and on behalf of the Bar we thank you for your enormous contributions.
5. The issue of gender equity and diversity are topics that are discussed regularly in international legal conferences. It is in the interest of sustainable development of the Hong Kong Bar for us to attract and retain all talents I am pleased to report that for new admissions over the past year, the male vs female ration is about 50:50. I am confident that a larger number of female members of the Bar will be called to the Inner Bars in the years to come.
6. Moving away from this topic, one of the other headlines of this year's appointment is that my lord has appointed 2 members from the same household. This has caused a few problems. On the happy day when their appointments were announced, Benson was asked by one of his friends (who shall remained unnamed) as to how they were going to celebrate that evening and he wanted to throw a party for Benson. In response, Benson meekly declined

all invitations and informed his friends that for that evening, it was his turn to carry out laundry duties at home. I did not ask if Frances was out having a good time that evening. I did not ask Edwin Choy if he went out drinking with Frances instead of Benson. But it is clear that gender equality was practiced at the Tsoi household, or a colleague in Parkside Chambers told me, maybe not.

7. On a more serious note, I hope I will be forgiven for sounding like a broken record, in impressing upon the new silks for their support to the independent Bar. We have just been reminded by the Chief Justice and the Secretary for Justice of the importance and the societal role of leading counsel in this jurisdiction and we wholeheartedly agree. The Bar will also be counting on you for the support for the institution.
8. As many of you are aware, the Bar is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. I am pleased to report that it has grown in size in a steady manner. We now have over 1,600 barristers in this jurisdiction for the first time and we continue to attract the best talents. Each of the 3 new silks have their particular expertise and we are confident that they will make significant contributions to the Bar:
  - (1) Benson was described by many as the leading criminal junior in the Hong Kong Bar and was basically in all high

profile criminal cases. In addition to the overwhelming support from the local criminal bar, his appointment was also supported by virtually all leading London criminal silk and my inbox was flooded with their letters of support from London.

(2) Frances practices mainly in commercial, company and insolvency law. She has been a high flyer from Day 1 after completing her studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong before she went to Oxford and Harvard. She first made the headline when she was still a junior when Tony Chan complained in the probate trial that Frances was the one who subjected him to vigorous questioning when preparing for trial.

(3) Last but not least, there is my colleague Queenie Lau. In addition to a most successful civil practice, Queenie is known to be someone who is extremely popular and is known to be someone with many friends. When I checked again this morning, Queenie has over 1,700 friends on Facebook and one of my colleagues asked if we have to move the reception later today to the Convention Centre instead of the Hong Kong Club all because of Queenie.

9. We are sure the 3 of you will do extremely well in silk. Instead of quoting from the our favorite judgments, this is the rare

occasion where one can derive support from the someone else – as spiderman said: “with great power comes great responsibility”. We are sure you will bear this in mind in your new roll.

10. On behalf of the Bar, I offer my warmest congratulations again to the new silks and their families. I wish them every success in their careers in the years to come.

Victor Dawes, SC  
Chairman  
Hong Kong Bar Association

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