



Press Release

2 September 2009

For immediate release

**Joint Statement by**  
**The Hong Kong Bar Association and The Law Society of Hong Kong**

The Hong Kong Bar Association and the Law Society of Hong Kong have learnt of the Chief Justice's decision to take early retirement as from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010. We understand, accept and respect his reasons for that decision. As is typical of the Chief Justice's approach to his duties, we can see that the decision has been taken with the best long-term interests of the HKSAR and its Judiciary in mind.

We believe that the contribution of the Chief Justice to the rule of law in the HKSAR cannot be overstated. His stewardship of the Judiciary since 1997 has been enormously successful, and of great importance in the development of the HKSAR and its legal system since the resumption of sovereignty. That there is today such a strong, independent and internationally respected Judiciary in the HKSAR - a matter vital to the continued enjoyment of the rule of law - is testament to the Chief Justice's able leadership. He has always been extremely active in the development of Hong Kong jurisprudence through his full participation in the Court of Final Appeal, not least by his own careful and erudite written judgments. He has also been tireless in his administrative role, in shaping the Judiciary, for example by encouraging the most suitable legal practitioners to become Judges and by inviting the most eminent and respected foreign jurists to sit as Non Permanent Judges in the Court of Final Appeal. He has further spearheaded the latest reforms in the administration of justice in the HKSAR by introducing the Civil Justice Reforms and promoting alternative dispute resolution.

There is speculation as to whether or not any other factors have influenced the Chief Justice's decision to take early retirement. Such speculation appears to the two professional legal bodies to be wholly misplaced and without basis. The decision - predicated as it clearly is on the Chief Justice's desire to act in the best interests of a continuing strong and independent judiciary best able to develop Hong Kong jurisprudence and to uphold and promote the rule of law in Hong Kong - is one which should inspire confidence both in Hong Kong and overseas as to the strength and maturity of the HKSAR now and in the years to come.

The two professional bodies thank the Chief Justice for his effort and success in that role. We are sure that the remaining 12 months of his public service will continue to be directed for the benefit of the people of Hong Kong.