

Chairman's Report for 2024

1. 2024 was a busy and fruitful year for the Bar.

Article 23

2. Shortly after the Opening of Legal Year in January, the Government announced the consultation for the proposed legislation under Article 23 of the Basic Law and the window for consultation was only a month. Members of the Council together with some 20 members were mobilised to put together our comments on the proposed legislation. I am proud to say that our response was probably the most comprehensive report submitted. At the end of the day, our concerns were spelt out thoroughly. Some of our views were taken on board, some not.
3. I would like to thank our members who worked tirelessly in producing our report. I would also like to thank those of you who wrote or spoke to me in the course of that month. It was an important issue for Hong Kong and our members have demonstrated the strength of the independent bar in their contributions.

75th Anniversary

4. As our members are aware, 2024 was a year where we celebrated our 75th Anniversary and a number of activities were organised to mark this important milestone. The most important event was of course our Gala Dinner, which took place on 1 November 2024. It was the largest gathering that we had and I can say with certainty that those who attended had a wonderful evening. I would like to thank in particular the Organising

Committee chaired by Catrina Lam and our wonderful staff for putting the memorable event together.

5. This was also a year where we were able to confer the title of Honorary Life Member upon the Rt. Honourable Lord Hoffmann and the title of Life Member on Jacqueline Pamela Leong SC. Their contributions to the rule of law and administration of justice in Hong Kong are well known. We are delighted that they are able to celebrate with us during this important year.

Overseas Engagement

6. In line with our tradition, the Bar continues to engage with our overseas counterparts. Over the past year, members of the Bar Council have represented us in a large number of conferences overseas. A large group of our members attended the World Bar Conference in Belfast and Dublin, which took place in May 2024. This was the bi-annual conference organised by the referral bars around the world. I hope we can bring the conference back to Hong Kong in the near future.

Mainland Engagement

7. Our engagements with our counterparts in the Mainland also continued throughout 2024. In terms of legal education, our common law courses in Peking University and the East China University of Political Science and Law continued and students of the 2 courses also had the opportunity to visit us for their mini-pupillages over the summer. We also visited other provinces throughout the year to give numerous lectures on common law and to promote the independent bar. I thank our members who participated in our efforts.

Administration

8. The part year was no doubt one of the busiest years for our Secretariat. There were a number of departures, and a number of new staff have joined us. I often feel very sorry for our staff as many of them have had to work unreasonable hours to cope with our workload. To discharge our role as a self-regulated profession, we need to ensure that we discharge our duties professionally and efficiently. The Bar Council is of the strong view that modernising our Secretariat is essential and more resources have been deployed to invest in our future. To begin with, there will be significant upgrade to our IT system to make sure that to digitalise our administration and our record.
9. I would like to thank our dedicated staff for their hard work and their efforts throughout the years. There were many long nights and unreasonable deadlines and they have really done their best to serve our members.
10. Special thanks must go to our Director of Administration and Development for the magnificent job she did in leading our Secretariat. Bonnie Chiu is probably one of the most hard-working persons that I have come across and she is also somebody who truly understands the expectations of our members and the public. I have every confidence that our administration will improve under her leadership.
11. I am also pleased that Eugene Yim and Martin Wong will be staying on as our Honorary Secretary and Deputy Honorary Secretary. They are instrumental to the works of the Secretariat and have discharged their roles with dedication and good humour (which was probably necessary for their mental health).

Word of Thanks

12. Finally, as our members are aware, I will be stepping down as your Chairman having occupied this office for 3 years. It has been my honour to have had the opportunity to serve this great institution. I want to thank members of the Bar Council for their support and trust. It has been my privilege to work with each and every one of you.
13. There will always be challenges for the Bar if we are to discharge our societal role in upholding the rule of law and the independence of the profession. It is of course impossible to achieve this without the strong support of our members. It is natural and indeed important for our members to hold and to be able to express different opinions to your Chairman. I thank those of you who have reached out in expressing your views and giving me support and guidance.
14. I have every confidence that the new leadership will do a much better job than me in the coming year and I am delighted that we will be led by senior members who truly understands our values and our roles. I hope our members will continue to support our new leadership just as you have very kindly supported myself in the past 3 years.

17 January 2025

Victor Dawes SC

Chairman of the Hong Kong Bar Association