

Statement by SJ on announcement of retirement of Chief Justice

The Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, today (October 31) made the following statement on the announcement of retirement of the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Geoffrey Ma Tao-li:

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Geoffrey Ma Tao-li, for his invaluable contribution to the Judiciary over the years in upholding the judicial independence, enhancing its transparency and service efficiency. Chief Justice Ma is dedicated to perfecting the judicial system of the Special Administrative Region.

As the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Chief Justice Ma has spared no effort in explaining the way justice is administered in Hong Kong, thereby enhancing the public awareness of our legal system which is the key to its continuing utility and acceptance. Under his leadership, the Court of Final Appeal moved into the old Supreme Court located on Jackson Road in 2015, signifying a milestone in the history of the Judiciary. The completion of the West Kowloon Law Courts Building in 2016 also provided much needed space for the effective operation of courts.

Chief Justice Ma is endeavoured to maintain the best quality judges in the Hong Kong Judiciary. He proposed to extend the retirement ages of judges at all levels of court to retain talents and attract candidates with professional qualities to join the Judiciary. During his tenure, non-permanent judges from other common law jurisdictions of the Court of Final Appeal are of eminent reputation. The Right Honourable the Baroness Brenda Hale of Richmond and the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, PC, are the first two female judges appointed to the Court of Final Appeal. Their appointment marked a historic moment in Hong Kong.

Chief Justice Ma is well respected by the local legal sector and among the international community. He was appointed a Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court in 2001, and then appointed a Justice of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of the High Court until he was appointed the Chief Judge of the High Court in 2003 to lead the High Court both judicially and administratively. He also implemented and promoted the Civil Justice Reform. He was subsequently appointed the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal in September 2010. Chief Justice Ma is acknowledged as a model exemplifying the highest standard of professionalism by administering justice in a fair and impartial manner. With his charming personality, Chief Justice Ma is well liked by the legal sector and his colleagues in the Judiciary.

On behalf of the Department of Justice, I convey our sincere appreciation to Chief Justice Ma and wish him a happy retirement.