

**Press Release**  
**on the Implementation of the Civil Justice Reform**

The Honourable Chief Justice Andrew Li, announced today [19 March] that he had accepted the recommendations made by the Working Party on Civil Justice Reform (“Working Party”) in its Final Report (“the Report”).

2. In accepting the recommendations, the Chief Justice noted that the Working Party had conducted a thorough consultation exercise on the 80 proposals put forward in its Interim Report. About 100 submissions were received, and most of the submissions were well considered. The Chief Justice noted that after giving thorough consideration to the responses received, the Working Party had made its recommendations for reform. The Chief Justice also noted that most of the recommendations have significant support from those who responded in the consultation exercise, including the Bar Association and the Law Society.

3. “I would like to congratulate Mr. Justice Chan, the Chairman, Mr. Justice Ribeiro, the Deputy Chairman, and all Members of the Working Party for this landmark Report. The Working Party is to be commended for the breadth and depth of its work. I am grateful for the excellent work which the Working Party has done in producing this thorough and well-balanced Report. The Report provides the blueprint for much needed reform to our civil justice system. I am confident that it commands respect from the legal profession and all concerned parties. And it would be of considerable interest to other overseas jurisdictions,” said the Chief Justice.

4. “The important task for the Judiciary now is to proceed to implement the recommendations, with a view to improving the cost-effectiveness of our civil justice system, making it less complex and reducing delays, while always bearing in mind the fundamental requirement of doing justice between the parties,” stated the Chief Justice.

5. In implementing the recommendations of the Report, the Chief Justice took the view that in order to achieve the overall objectives of the reform, the recommendations which are to be implemented by the Judiciary should be taken forward together as one integrated package as most of the recommendations are inter-related.

6. The Chief Justice noted that the implementation of the recommendations requires support and assistance from the Administration and expressed his confidence that such support and assistance will be forthcoming.

7. “First, we require the Department of Justice to deal with the legislative drafting involved, as a substantial number of amendments to the Rules of the High Court are necessary, in addition to some amendments to primary legislation. I have been discussing this with the Secretary for Justice, and I am grateful for her positive response. I hope that the drafting process can start as soon as possible. Secondly, we would in due course need the assistance of the Administration in navigating the legislative amendments through the process. Thirdly, we would need some capital money for implementing the reform. We would seek to use the unspent balance of \$6.94 million in the Judiciary’s Save and Invest Account for the work involved. In addition, we would need resources to enhance and revamp the IT system in support of the reform at the appropriate stage. Apart from these one-off funding requirements, the Judiciary would use its best endeavours to manage the recurrent resource implications from our existing resources, though we need to monitor the situation closely to see if this is feasible,” said the Chief Justice.

8. “I have asked Mr. Justice Ma, Chief Judge of the High Court, to take overall charge of the implementation of the recommendations. I have established a Steering Committee on Civil Justice Reform under his Chairmanship. Other members of the Steering Committee are Mr. Justice Woo, Vice-President of the Court of Appeal; Mr. Justice Hartmann, Madam Justice Chu, Mr. Justice Barma and Mr. Justice Reyes, Judges of the Court of First Instance; and HH Judge Au Yeung, Judge of the District Court and Acting Registrar of the Court of Final Appeal. The Steering Committee will deal with all aspects of implementation of the recommendations which are within the Judiciary’s responsibility,” said the Chief Justice.

9. Having regard to the fact that the majority of the recommendations would require amendments to the Rules of the High Court, it is intended that the Steering Committee on Civil Justice Reform would put forward concrete proposals in this regard to the High Court Rules Committee for consideration.

10. The Chief Justice stated that the successful implementation of reform would depend on the contribution of many parties. “The Judiciary, through the Judiciary Administration, will keep the Panel on the Administration of Justice and Legal Services of the Legislative Council informed of developments in the process, and would consult the Panel as appropriate. And the Judiciary would interact with and consult the legal profession and other concerned parties as appropriate in the course of implementation,” said the Chief Justice.

11. As to the timing, the Chief Justice expects that it would take 2 to 3 years to implement the recommendations. He said, “The Judiciary would proceed with the work as expeditiously as possible. We would certainly keep up the momentum for reform. But we would need to be realistic. Substantial changes to the civil justice system are involved and it is important to get it right.”

12. “It is timely that we take a hard and critical look at our system and decide on reform which is considered appropriate for Hong Kong’s own circumstances in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I believe that the reform to be implemented would bring about a much more effective civil justice system and will meet the expectations of the community,” concluded the Chief Justice.

13. It is noted that there are a number of recommendations in the Final Report which require further study by bodies outside the Judiciary. The Chief Justice would be discussing with the Secretary for Justice on how the further study and consultation regarding the proposed scheme for multi-party litigation should be taken forward. The Chief Justice would also be writing to the Chief Secretary for Administration, inviting the Administration to consider the proposal of empowering the Director of Legal Aid to fund mediation with legal aid in suitable cases.