

Speech by Dr Anthony Francis NEOH, QC, SC, JP, Chairman of Independent Police Complaints Council, Reviewing Officer at Hong Kong Police College Passing Out Parade on 16 February 2019

Commissioner Lo, Director Lau, Instructors, Graduates, ladies and gentlemen,

1. I am very honoured to be here today, at the Hong Kong Police College, to share this significant moment with you all, as your Reviewing Officer for your Passing Out Parade. It is especially gratifying to witness the graduation of 34 inspectors and 226 constables. You have successfully completed the stringent training programme. Now as members of the Force, you are ready to embark on a new chapter in your life, by joining hands with your fellow members of the Force to serve and protect our community. Just now at the Parade Ground, I was very touched to see so many young faces brimming with confidence and vigour. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt congratulations to each and every one of you, as well as your instructors and families.
2. This year marks the 175th anniversary of Hong Kong Police Force, which makes it especially meaningful for all graduates to celebrate this important milestone and stride forward with the Force. Thanks to the professional training of Police College and the unremitting efforts and commitment of the entire Force, Hong Kong has remained one of the safest and most stable cities in the world with consistently low crime rate. As mentioned by the Commissioner at the Hong Kong Police Force 175th Anniversary Open Day last month, the number of crimes in Hong Kong has dropped to a new low. It is also encouraging to learn that, according to the Prosperity Index published by the Legatum Institute of the United Kingdom, Hong Kong's performance as measured by the "Safety and Security" indicator has continued to improve over the past three years, ranking fourth globally in 2018.

3. The latest Police Service Satisfaction Survey and Public Opinion Survey showed that 84% of respondents were satisfied with the overall service performance of Hong Kong Police Force, and nearly 80% of respondents expressed their confidence in the Police Force. Both figures are record high. The city takes pride in the achievements of our first-class Police Force. I am sure you too shall be extremely proud to be part of this elite team.

4. Against the backdrop of a rapidly changing society with increasing public expectations, members of the Force will, inevitably, face with a growing number of challenges. As Chairman of Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC), I believe the fundamental challenge faced by members of the Force will be how to uphold your professionalism and hold fast to your beliefs and commitment in serving the people of Hong Kong in the midst of an increasingly complex environment. A couple of months ago, I met with representatives from two police staff associations. They recounted to me one of the critical rescue operations at sea during Typhoon Mangkhut (Hurricane Signal No. 10), when in the face of perilous danger and putting their own safety aside, members of the Force successfully saved lives by their professionalism, exemplary devotion to duty and bravery. They also shared with me the stressful scenarios that the frontline police officers must cope with everyday while carrying out their duties. During the frequent interactions between members of the public and police officers, conflicts will be triggered, which may eventually give rise to complaints. The role of IPCC is, therefore, to strike a fair balance between the legal rights that the public enjoys and the exercise of the duties and powers of the Force. We vet every single complaint case in a fair and impartial manner, based on evidence and in accordance with applicable laws. IPCC rigorously observes the principle long revered in the Chinese Classics of “What is ‘is’ and What is not, ‘is not’” and strives to restore each case to the real facts to ensure fair treatment for both the complainants and the complainees.

5. Most importantly, the IPCC and the Force share the same goal, to enhance the service quality of the Police and, strive for excellence. To this end, IPCC provides recommendations on ways to

improve the work and procedures of the Police from time to time. Taking large-scale public order event as an example, IPCC put forward practical suggestions to the Police in different aspects including public order and media arrangement. The number of complaints in relation to large-scale public order events, such as the 1 July procession, thus has dropped to almost none in the past two to three years, giving full play to the function of the two-tier police complaints system as well as achieving the goal of improving service quality at large.

6. Standing tall at this Parade Ground, you are not only a fresh force to the Police but also new blood in the civil service. I became a civil servant in the 1960s and have had a deep-rooted relationship with the police and other law enforcement agencies. Perhaps I could offer a few words of advice from my own experience working in the public sector. In my humble opinion, a fearless and selfless police officer should have “Heart” and “Rule”. For “Heart”, he should be able to gain public confidence in the Force; reach out to those in need with compassion; and be determined to keep abreast of the latest crime trend to tackle against cross-boundary cybercrimes and the wave of terrorist violence that is threatening the whole world. For “Rule”, he should abide by the law and uphold the rule of law at all times. If ever in the future you are confronted with difficult situations or riddled with self-doubt at work, I hope you would recall what I said just now, and remember your pledge to serve the people and maintain law and order of the city.

7. I have recently watched a short film produced by the Police Force called “A Small Role? But Profound Impact!” which I truly enjoyed. Like the main character of the film, you might have moments of doubts as to why you wanted to join the Police. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that there is no “small role” in the Police Force. Even a trifle in the eyes of some can possibly make a “profound impact” on someone’s life. The work of the police is arduous and far-reaching. Nonetheless, I am confident that you could exercise sound judgement and surmount whatever challenges lying ahead, so long as you remain committed to

your goal in serving the public and fighting crime.

8. It has been an encouraging experience watching you march forward with pride and dignity. Stepping out of the Police College doors, you will soon report for duty and share the responsibility of safeguarding the city. While wishing you great success in the years to come, I also hope you will find satisfaction and fulfilment in your career. To each and every one of you here, I wish you good health and happiness. Finally, I would like to thank all members of Hong Kong Police Force, for their contribution to the prosperity and stability of our city and our home.
9. Thank you.

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