

Welcoming address by CUHK LAW Dean Professor Lutz-Christian Wolff at the 88th Congregation for the Conferment of Master's Degrees – Faculty of Law Session on 21 November 2020.

Pro-vice Chancellor Professor Poon, Honored Guests, Graduates, Colleagues!

Today is a very special day, the day on which the University confers degrees to CUHK LAW graduates and the day on which we celebrate their achievements. It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you on behalf of CUHK LAW to this important event.

I wish to convey my heartfelt congratulations to you, the CUHK LAW graduates of the year 2020. You have achieved a lot! We are proud of your achievements because your success is our success is the success of CUHK LAW.

Every single one of you has her or his own stories how your success at CUHK LAW came about. When you look back you may think of those long hours studying cases written up in language so incomprehensible that you really wondered how this could have turned into important legal principles. Or you may think of fast food sessions in the CUHK Graduate Law Centre. You may remember exams which you passed with much higher grades than expected and others where you felt that the results were disappointing. You may think of the friends you made during your time at CUHK LAW hoping that these will be friendships for life. And you may think of your professors, their voices, the way they engaged you, the way they made you happy or angry, all of course done with the single goal to support your studies and to empower you to succeed. I personally also hope that when looking back you will think of your own legal discoveries, those moments when incomprehension and confusion suddenly turned into enlightenment, when you became able to appreciate the beauty of a particular legal tool, a structure, a legal principle, i.e. when you were able to appreciate the beauty of the law.

Many of these stories will stay with you for the rest of your life. They will be important for you as they are important for us. And you will of course remember the last year of your studies which was so unusual first because of the protests in Hong Kong and then because of the COVID-19 outbreak. These events have required all of us to be very flexible, to adapt quickly to new situations and to stay focused despite the ever-changing teaching and learning environment. But we have demonstrated that we can cope with developments of this kind, that we are able to identify and take advantage of opportunities which arise at the same time, and we have done so together, as CUHK LAW.

Your graduation marks the end of your course of study at CUHK LAW. It marks the end of a particular period. But it also marks a beginning. Today we are therefore not only celebrating your graduation, but also the start of a new stage of your lives.

I want to make three points in this regard.

First, Michelle Obama once said:

“Through my education, I didn’t just develop skills, I didn’t just develop the ability to learn, but I developed confidence.”

I sincerely hope that you have not only acquired legal knowledge and skills during your studies at CUHK LAW, but also confidence. There will be no limits of what you will be able to achieve in the future if you believe in yourself. Be open-minded, be creative, be positive, and – most importantly - stay true to yourself and your beliefs. Set your own goals and determine the strategy to be pursued to achieve your goals. Do not shy away from changing your goals or your strategy when it turns out that this is needed. Be self-confident about yourself and your abilities and act accordingly!

Second, most of you are moving forward to become lawyers. It is important to remember that as lawyers you will in the future serve a very important role in society. This is a huge responsibility, but it is also extremely rewarding. Many people will rely on you and your professional work. You will not disappoint them! You will discharge your professional duties in a responsible, in a professional manner. Most importantly, never forget that as lawyers you are tasked to support and protect the rule of law and thus a core pillar of every society. The peaceful co-existence of often very diverse people depends on the rule of law and your fight for this fundamentally important principle.

Third, your affiliation with CUHK LAW will of course not end today. We hope that you will – as alumni – continue to be active members of the CUHK LAW family also after graduation, that you will stay in touch, that you will join our events and - last but not least - that you will continue to support CUHK LAW and other members of the CUHK LAW family.

We are CUHK LAW! We all are!

Again, congratulations on your graduation. On behalf of all my colleagues I wish you all the best. We hope that during your time at CUHK LAW you have acquired everything needed to move forward into a bright legal future, for your own benefit, the benefit of CUHK LAW and the benefit of the society as a whole.

Thank you!