

Opening Speech by Justice Lee Seiu Kin on 28 March 2017

Mr Vijayendran

Members of the Bar

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. A very good afternoon to you. It gives me great pleasure to be here at the Law Society's Legal Technology Roadshow.

2. This year marks the Law Society's golden jubilee. When it was established 50 years ago, the world was an unstable place in political terms, but technology marched at a sedate pace. Throughout much of the past half century, it was not too difficult to adapt to new technologies because there was sufficient time to get used to the teleprinter, fax machine, word processor. But changes became rapid in the later part of that period. I think that when the time comes for the Society to celebrate its centenary, perhaps one of the younger members present here today might be standing in a similar podium and describe the pace of change that we see today as "sedate".

3. In his address at the Opening of the Legal Year 2017, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon highlighted how and why the legal process must be transformed in response to technology advancements. He also mentioned that technology has reached a 'tipping point', where it can 'meaningfully be applied to our work', and that 'dramatic developments will force us to rethink entire areas of practice'. It is becoming clear that technology is at the state where it can bring about both challenges and opportunities. The world that we live in today faces more frequent and unpredictable disruptions. The scale of such disruptions, when they occur, is also magnified by the forces of globalisation and the more interconnected world we live in today.

4. But technology must not be seen as something to be vanquished because it threatens to disrupt or challenge how we have been accustomed to operate. Technology holds the promise of greater productivity and effectiveness. We must seize the opportunity to leverage this to higher quality legal services and cost savings for law firms and, ultimately, for the clients and the society at large.

5. The Singapore Judiciary has been an early adopter of technology. EFS was rolled out almost two decades ago. We have continued to keep pace with technological developments, with e-Litigation replacing EFS in 2013. In the same year, the Integrated Criminal Case Filing and Management System (ICMS) was launched. Technology is used in our courtrooms with digital recording and remote witnesses. The Supreme Court also encourages the use of e-Trial platforms. In the *Global Yellow Pages Limited vs Promedia Pte Ltd* trial in late 2014, the Opus 2 Magnum system was deployed successfully for a paperless hearing which significantly reduced the number of trial days required and expedited the preparations for the trial and submissions by counsel and grounds of decision by the judge. Our IT staff collaborated with the parties' solicitors and the team from Opus 2 Magnum to adapt the equipment and cabling in the courtroom to enable the Opus 2 Magnum system to be set up within a short time and the e-hearing to proceed seamlessly. Let me state that we welcome such application of technology to enhance efficient conduct of trials and will be prepared to collaborate with similar service providers and parties to test bed technologies for e-hearings and other processes in the Supreme Court.

6. Currently, lawyers, particularly those from the smaller practices will find it time consuming and challenging to sift through the myriad technologies available in the market today. The Ministry of Law has collaborated with the Law Society of Singapore to conduct the Legal Industry Needs Study last year and formulated an Action Plan to address the capability gaps faced by the small and medium sized law firms, to assist them in adopting a baseline suite of legal technology.

7. The work of the Law Society in this regard dovetails with that of the Singapore Academy of Law, which presented its Legal Technology Vision at the Opening of the Legal Year. The Vision document was developed following extensive consultation with stakeholders and industry experts.

8. The Vision document sets out a developmental road map with a four-pronged approach, much of which is expected to take place over a five-year time horizon. The

Ministry, the Judiciary, the Academy and the Law Society will work closely within their respective mandates to realise the Vision.

9. The Law Society will focus on the first prong of the Vision document which is aimed at encouraging widespread adoption of baseline technologies. This dovetails with the Law Society's plans to act as a facilitator in assisting law firms to achieve a baseline suite of legal technology.

10. This Legal Technology Roadshow will spearhead the Law Society's efforts in encouraging the widespread adoption of baseline technologies amongst the small and medium sized law firms. The roadshow will feature the products and services of legal technology providers and business development consultants who are participating in the "Tech Start for Law" programme which was launched on the 1st of March this year by the Ministry of Law, SPRING Singapore and the Law Society.

11. Looking at the solution providers amassed by the Law Society and the interest shown by Law Society members today, I must say that this Roadshow is an encouraging start to the realisation of the Legal Technology Vision. This is but the first of many steps in the transformation of the legal sector, to stay ahead of the impending disruption that technology brings. I must congratulate and applaud the Law Society's efforts in this regard, in roping in these technology solution providers and putting together subsidy schemes together with SPRING, to help encourage the adoption of solutions. Through this Roadshow and the Law Society's other initiatives, I hope to see the legal profession in Singapore become truly technology-enabled and ready to face the future.

Thank you.