

Swearing in of First Minister

First Minister, on behalf of the Court, I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your re-appointment as First Minister of the Scottish Government. It is a great honour to hold that Office and an even greater one to be appointed to it a second time. I also welcome members of your family who have attended today.

You are well acquainted with the arduous and solemn responsibilities that come with the stewardship of a country. The burden of those responsibilities is shared between the three pillars of the State: the government, the legislature, and the judiciary. It is for the government to govern, the legislature to set the laws and hold government to account, and the judiciary to uphold the law.

The separation of these pillars and mutual respect between them are the essential principles that guard against tyranny. I am grateful for the Scottish Government's continued adherence to these principles, to which I know you personally are strongly committed.

On occasion, one or more of those pillars may come under strain. Just as it is the duty of each to remain separate, it is also their duty to support each other's role in upholding the purpose of the State.

That purpose is to provide a place which is safe, where commerce can be conducted with confidence and where the basic rights of the individual citizen are respected and upheld. To fulfil that purpose, the State must provide a guarantee to its citizens. A guarantee of fairness. That the rules are clear. That they apply to everyone, equally. That those who break them will face consequences. That the rules

are applied in public view, without delay. And, that nobody – particularly government, Parliament or the judiciary – is above them. That guarantee of fairness is central to the success of our country and to a vibrant democracy.

We have a label for this guarantee. We call it The Rule of Law.

It is the responsibility of all three pillars of the State to extol its benefits and explain what it means to people's everyday lives in a way that makes it real.

If we do not, then we cede the field to those who wish to undermine our democratic institutions and sow division for their own ends. I encourage you and your government to continue to be vocal in supporting the Rule of Law, both in Parliament and to the public at large. The courts will continue to speak in support of it through their judgments by acting independently to enforce the law fairly and equally for all.

First Minister, you have the Court's very best wishes as you continue to lead the Government through these uncertain times.