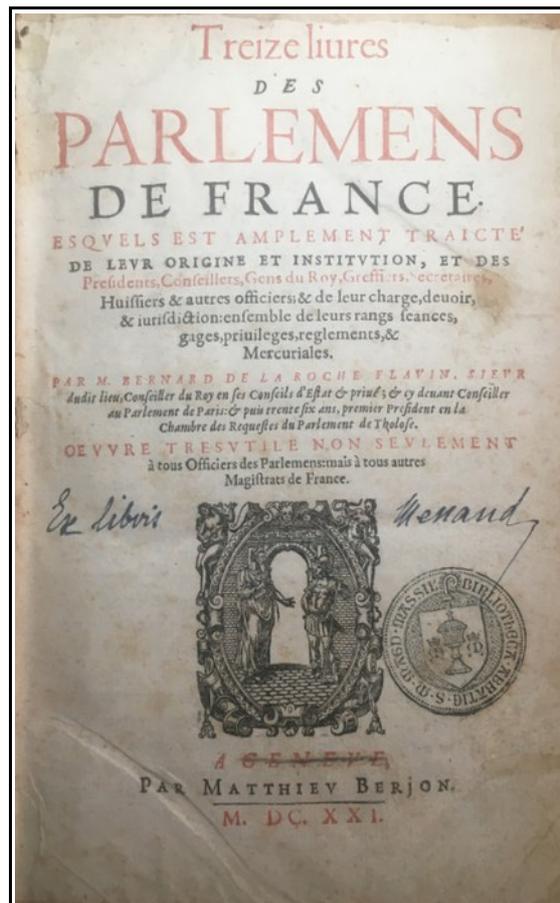




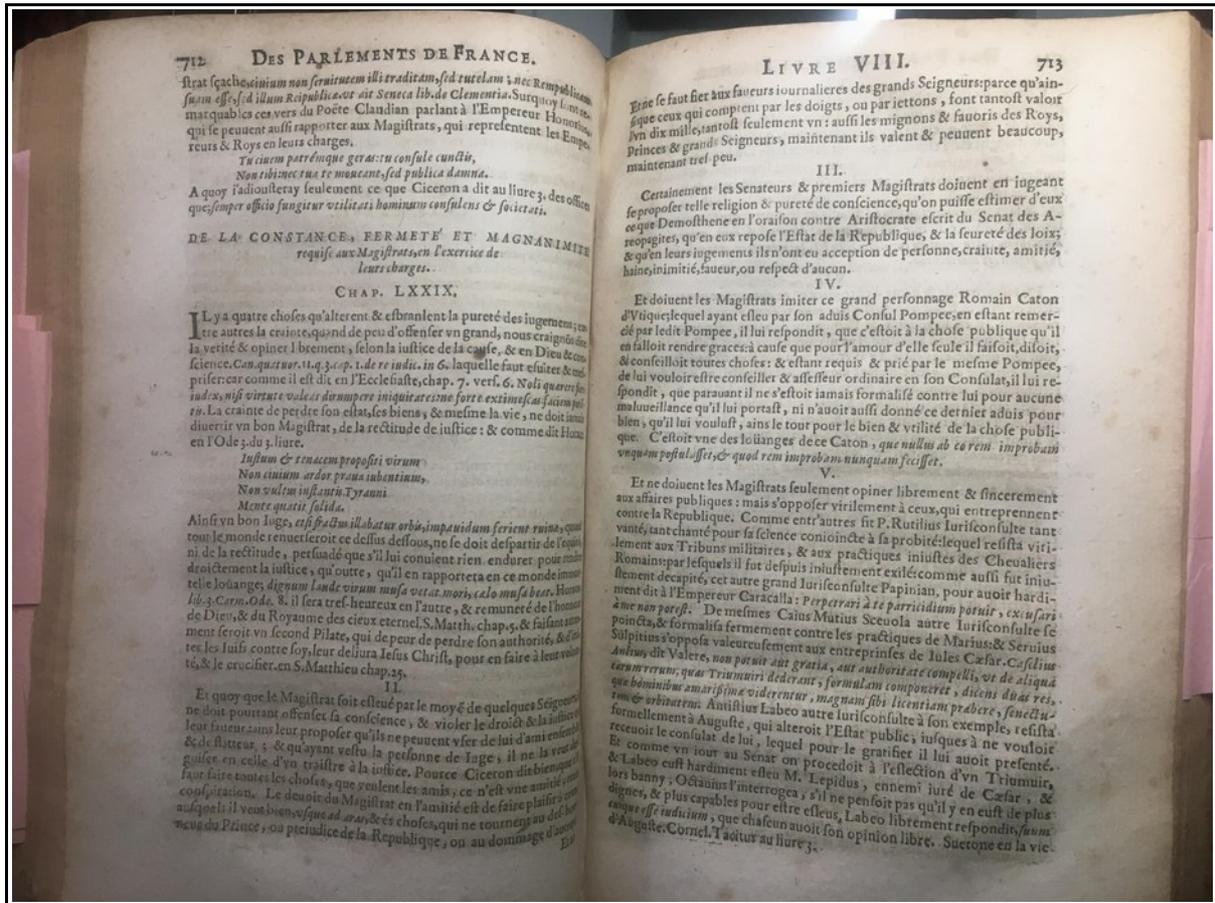
## LESSONS FROM THE PAST AT THIS TIME OF PANDEMIC



Dear Colleagues,

The final months of 2020 were characterized by a “second wave” of the Covid-19 pandemic. This made the IAJ once again cancel and/or postpone all the meetings in person that we had hoped to be able to organise, not only last year, but also in 2021. As a matter of fact, all of them were replaced by online events. Needless to say, this kind of activity keeps all of us busy (even much busier than before), without offering the “pleasant” aspects of our usual meetings, such as the possibility to discuss *de visu* our common problems, to see personally how judicial issues are dealt with in other countries, to make new experiences and acquire new knowledge, while travelling around the world.

While keeping well alive our hopes that the vaccines will help us getting out of the tunnel, we try to figure out how the future—in particular the future of justice—will be after the pandemic. In this gloomy framework, maybe reading the experience of colleagues of centuries ago could be of some help. This time I would like to quote the exhortation of Bernard de La Roche Flavin (1552-1627), President of the “chambre des requêtes” of the Toulouse Court of Appeal (or “Parliament,” as those courts were called at the time), who invited the judges to render justice “without fear of anyone”, prompting colleagues to show qualities like “constancy, firmness and magnanimity in the exercise of their duties”:



In fact, when his work *Treize Livres des Parlemens de France* was published (1621), it sparked off a scandal. The judge was revealing to his readers all the failings, shortcomings and weaknesses of his colleagues; he was therefore submitted to what today would be a disciplinary proceeding and finally excluded from the court. But his book is still read and quoted today, four hundred years later! This gives us a lesson on the duty that we the judges have to bear witness to the truth and only to the truth, no matter how hard it can be. And this is all the more true in these difficult times.

In this moment I am thinking in particular to the moving words that, among many difficulties, we receive from our colleagues who are suffering (many of them still in prison, since years!) just for having shown their courage and independence; we published recently one of those letters (see <https://www.iaj-uim.org/news/colleagues-message-from-a-turkish-prison/>). We bear all of them and their families in our hearts, we don't forget them and we committ ourselves even harder to our daily struggle for the values we believe in.

So, once again I dare to express the hope that our activities can come back to be as they were before, whereas we must keep in mind that the path back to the situation pre-Covid-19 is not simple, nor short.

By reading this newsletter you will get, as usual, an idea on what is going on at the international level, as far as subjects concerning judicial independence are concerned. As always, I am available to provide you with any additional information you might need and I invite you once again to visit our web site, which we try to keep always updated.

In the meantime, also on behalf of President Tony Pagone and of the whole Presidency Committee, I send you my best regards and wishes for a year in which the whole world leaves behind the worries related to the pandemic.



Giacomo Oberto  
Secretary-General of the IAJ

**INDEX**

· MEETING BY VIDEO LINK OF THE PRESIDENCY COMMITTEE IN SEPTEMBER 2020 - LETTERS AND COMMUNIQUES BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO ALL MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS.....	3
· RECENT ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES OF THE EAJ - EUROPEAN R.G. OF THE IAJ.....	6
· RECENT ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES OF THE AFRICAN, IB.A. and A.N.A.O. R.Gs. OF THE IAJ.....	9
· RECENT CO-OPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL BODIES.....	10

## **MEETING BY VIDEO LINK OF THE PRESIDENCY COMMITTEE IN SEPTEMBER 2020 LETTERS AND COMMUNIQUES BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO ALL MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS**

### *Meeting in person of the Secretariat-General in Rome, on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2020*

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, a meeting of the IAJ Presidency Committee took place by video link. In order to prepare the event, the Secretariat-General held a meeting in person on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2020 in the premises of the IAJ in the Justice Palace in Rome. This was the one and only “physical” meeting held by the IAJ since the 62<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of the Central Council in Nur-Sultan (September 2019) and it was made possible by the softening, at that time, of the security measures adopted in Italy to fight the Covid-19.



### *Meeting of the Presidency Committee by video link, on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020*

On 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2020 the IAJ Presidency Committee met online.

The main decisions adopted concerned the launching of a plan aimed at organising the 63<sup>rd</sup> IAJ annual meeting of the Central Council, to allow Member Associations to express themselves on themes such as the adoption of some relevant decisions concerning IAJ life, as well as the elections of the members of the Presidency Committee and of the Secretariat-General.

Therefore, during the meeting President Pagone stressed that the IAJ Central Council needs to hold a meeting and to have elections in 2021; however, the world will not get to normality in 2021 and the Presidency Committee has the responsibility of guiding the IAJ through these difficult times, keeping the association alive and vibrant.

President Pagone asked the Secretariat-General to investigate

and report, between November and February, about a platform for reliable elections, to be ready for a virtual meeting in September; which the Secretary-General has done (see below, in this paragraph). As to Costa Rica, he proposed to note that there was not yet a proposed schedule by the Association and suggested to continue to support it with its plans while waiting for the analysis of platforms by the Secretariat-General. A live meeting will be scheduled if the participation of all delegates will be possible.

### *Letters and communiqués by the President and the Secretary-General to all Member Associations*

Following the above online meeting of the Presidency Committee and subsequent contacts by e-mails of its members, the Secretariat-General issued a communiqué, streamlining the medium- and long-term activities of the IAJ during this time of pandemic.

In particular, as far as the 63<sup>rd</sup> annual meeting of the Central Council in 2021 is concerned, taking into account the current situation of uncertainty on the evolution of the Covid-19 pandemic in the world, and, in particular, its effect on the freedom of movement of people within the affected countries and across the borders, the following options can be envisaged for the 2021 annual meeting of the Central Council:

(a) Organisation of a “traditional” meeting (Central Council, Presidency Committee, Study Commissions and Regional Groups) in person in Costa Rica, or (should this Association not be able to hold the meeting as planned) in other available countries.

Of course, this option can be considered feasible only in the (unpredictable, at the moment) possibility of the full freedom of gathering in person in the hosting country, as well as the freedom to travel across all the borders, as was the case before the pandemic. The PC decided to continue this possibility, but only until the end of April/May 2021, because of the number of months that are usually necessary to organise such an event.

(b) Organisation, as an alternative, of a much shorter on-line meeting in the autumn 2021, but only for the completion of the main issues concerning our Organisation, namely:

1. Voting on the admission of the Associations of Gabon and Philippines;
2. Voting on the issue of possible loss of membership for non-compliance with the duty of payment of annual fees (see below);
3. Voting on other urgent issues, such as budget, urgent resolutions, etc.;
4. Voting to regularise the decision which have had to be taken by the PC in light of the pandemic and which have prevented the usual meetings;
5. Elections of IAJ Officials (President, Six Vice-Presidents and among them of the First Vice-President, Acclamation of the Honorary President and elections for the Secretary-General and Deputies SG);
6. Other items (to be decided by the Presidency Committee).

The Secretariat-General then started an **intense activity of preparation** for the possibility to hold such an event online, in autumn 2021, with the help of two very skilled IT experts. Several preparatory online meetings with such experts took place so far. We can anticipate that an online meeting of the Central Council can take place on the Zoom platform, that will last two or three sessions of about three hours each and that simultaneous translation (English/French/Spanish) can be provided. Member associations would receive in due time their passwords and links, allowing them to participate in the meeting and cast their votes for deliberations and elections, through the online system to be explained before the meeting. We would plan to organise a number of preparatory meetings with the Regional Groups and the Member Associations, in order to run tests and train them on the few technical features that will have to be learned in order effectively to participate in such a meeting.

As for the **statutory amendments**, the Presidency Committee decided that the proposal for amendments (on the prolongation of IAJ Officials in the case of “force majeure”) which we circulated some months ago among Member Associations presupposed the return of the world, after the pandemic, to normal conditions in a few months, but that is not the case. Therefore, this proposal will very soon be complemented with some additional provisions for future meetings by video link. The new proposal will encompass the one that has already been circulated (on postponement and “force majeure”). The proposal for amendment to deal with postponement and force majeure will be put for vote as it is, but an additional proposal will provide also a new set of provisions for virtual meetings. A new draft has been prepared by the Secretariat-General (in the five official IAJ languages), approved by the Presidency Committee and in the next days will be distributed to all National Associations in time for possible discussion and approval during the meeting in autumn 2021.

As far as the question of IAJ possible **loss of membership** is concerned, the Presidency Committee noted that, in the case of exclusion of a member for not compliance with the duty to pay annual fees, our rules provide that there can be a vote on the contrary during the meeting of the Central Council: a meeting, however, that in 2020 did not take place and in 2021 will be held under exceptional circumstances, so that a vote against exclusion is not likely. Furthermore, several countries usually pay their dues in cash currency during the meetings (some of them have problems with wire bank payments), and that clearly cannot be done during a meeting by video link. Having regard to this peculiar situation created by the world pandemic, the Presidency Committee decided to recommend to the Central Council the adoption of a proposal, to the following effect to be discussed and possibly approved during the Central Council meeting in autumn:

“The Presidency Committee proposes that the Central Council, taking into account the exceptional situation caused from the beginning of the year 2020 by the pandemic, all 92 national associations which were members on the official list of the IAJ at the date of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, keep their member status until further decision of the Central Council upon proposal of the Presidency Committee, with full voting rights. The implementation of provisions of Art. 5, Para. 2 and of art. 7, Para. 5 of the IAJ Constitution is suspended until further decision by the Central Council upon proposal of the Presidency Committee.”

This means, in practice, a “freezing” of the membership (and voting rights) situation at the date of 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2019, subject to further decisions by the Central Council, once the general situation has come back to normal conditions. Therefore, until further decision, the membership list is treated on the official one, as resulting from the following web page: <https://www.iajuim.org/member-associations/>. All members have full voting rights, assuming adoption of the proposal of the Presidency Committee by the Central Council.

As for the **Study Commissions**, the Presidency Committee noted, first of all, that, among all IAJ bodies, the Study Commissions are the ones that more than others can benefit from working and meeting online. They are accustomed to exchange ideas and views through the form of questionnaires. The Secretariat-General is as always ready to provide assistance in the distribution and publication of the questionnaires and of the subsequent replies. Once the deadline for the replies has expired, the four Presidents will be able, as always, to draft a provisional final report with recommendations. The moment of the discussion and adoption by the Commissions of the final report and recommendations could be replaced by a webinar to be held in the final part of 2021. As well for this event the Secretariat-General will organise the online meeting and provide assistance, also through the help of a pool of IT experts, that we contacted. In any case, the Presidency Committee expressed the view that it is vital for our Organisation to show to itself and to the world that the current pandemic cannot affect the capacity to produce results which are valuable and useful for all the judges of the world.

Finally, the Presidency Committee decided that it was necessary to resume the exercise of the ordinary **monitoring procedure**. Regional Groups are in the process of appointing two delegates each to be part of the ad hoc commission, presided over by Vice President Mikael Sjoberg. The Secretariat-General has already contacted the Associations belonging to the first group of 31, due to reply to the questionnaire within the deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2021.

On 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2020, following **letter from the President of the IAJ, Hon. Tony Pagone**, was circulated among all IAJ members:



**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JUDGES**  
**UNION INTERNATIONALE DES MAGISTRATS**  
**UNIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE MAGISTRADOS**  
**INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG DER RICHTER**  
**UNIONE INTERNAZIONALE DEI MAGISTRATI**

PALAZZO DI GIUSTIZIA - PIAZZA CAVOUR - 00193 ROMA - ITALY

17 December 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The 2020 calendar year is coming to an end and I write to wish you well for the coming year and to thank you for the work you have done during the pandemic. We were not prepared for the challenges that have confronted us in 2020 and each of us has been strained and tested: as individuals, as members of our community, as friends and relatives, and as officers of the law.

The stability, strength and acceptance of the legal system is crucial during times of mass public stress. The need to protect our health from an unseen virus comes at a cost to freedom and of great stresses in the ordinary working of the legal system. The public in such times needs its judiciary as a visible and continuous guarantee that freedoms are lost only temporarily and only to the extent necessary by the public emergencies. The public needs to feel confident in the law continues to be applied with rights enforced and upheld.

We usually wish each other well at this time of year for the festive season and the coming new year. For some it is a time of family gathering and religious observance; for others it is a time of respite from long days of work. Most of you this year have worked under extreme and difficult conditions. We are all looking to 2021 with new hopes for better days and return to what we may have taken for granted.

On behalf of the IAJ I am pleased to extend best wishes and also an expression of gratitude for all that you have done as judicial officers. The community is better for that work and with all of them we look to 2021 for renewed vigour and vitality.

Yours



**Tony Pagone**  
 President, International Association of Judges

Palazzo di Giustizia, Piazza Cavour, 00193 Roma, Italy  
 Tel.: +39 06 6883 2213 fax: +39 06 6871195  
 e-mail: secretariat@iaj-uim.org web: http://www.iaj-uim.org

According to art. 5 of the Regulations, since the Central Council did not meet in the course of 2020, the **annual accounts** of the IAJ were rendered, in accordance with art. 10 of the Constitution, to the IAJ President on the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2020.

A **new online meeting of the Presidency Committee** will take place in March. As usual a communiqué will be issued in order to inform all Member Associations about the resolutions adopted.

## RECENT ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES OF THE EAJ-EUROPEAN R.G. OF THE IAJ

### Informal meeting of the EAJ on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2021

The meeting of the European Association of Judges (EAJ), scheduled for the 4th – 6th of February 2021 in Porto (Portugal), was officially cancelled. The EAJ group was informed with a message of the President of ASJP, Mr Soares, the 16 of December. The meeting was replaced by an informal online meeting which was held on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2021.

The event took place under the presidency of the IAJ First Vice President and President of the EAJ Mr José Igreja Matos. In attendance were the IAJ Vice Presidents Duro Sessa e Mikael Sjoberg, as well as the acting Representative of the IBA Group, Walter Barone, IAJ Honorary President Christophe Régnard and the IAJ Secretary-General Giacomo Oberto. Honorary Presidents Guenter Woratsch, Maja Tratnik and Gerhard Reissner were also in attendance, as well as the Representatives of 35 EAJ member associations. The Assembly discussed current problems of the Judiciary in Europe, such as the situation of Justice in Poland, Romania and Turkey. Other items, such as the monitoring procedure and the initiatives of the EAJ for the endorsement of the Judiciaries in several Countries were dealt with and debated. President Igreja Matos related about his activities and participation in a number of online conferences held in these last months, whereas Secretary-General Oberto explained the plans and technical solutions for next EAJ and IAJ meetings and activities, in particular with reference to the 63<sup>rd</sup> IAJ annual meeting of the Central Council, due to take place this Autumn, either in person in Costa Rica, or online.



During the above-mentioned meeting, the Assembly unanimously approved an official declaration, prepared and signed by IAJ President Tony Pagone, in the form of a press release, for the endorsement of the Nobel Peace Prize candidature of the Polish Association Iustitia: a candidature which has been forwarded to the Nobel Prize Committee by a Norwegian Member of Parliament. This the text of the press release:



International Association of Judges  
Union Internationale des Magistrats  
Unión Internacional de Magistrados  
Internationale Richtervereinigung  
Unione Internazionale dei Magistrati

The President  
The Hon. Tony PAGONE  
Owen Dixon Chamber, 205 William Street, Melbourne Vic 3000, Australia  
Phone: +61 3 9225 7879, Fax: +61 3 9225 7870, E-mail: capagone@pagone.com.au

**Press Release  
Nobel Peace Prize**

An independent judiciary maintaining the rule of law is fundamental to the preservation of peace. Ordinary citizens can safely and reliably go about their daily life, enter into contracts, develop meaningful relationships and live freely without fear when they have an independent judiciary guaranteeing the application of the rule of law without fear or favour.

The International Association of Judges, therefore, fully supports the nomination of IUSTITIA for the Nobel Peace Prize. IUSTITIA has fearlessly upheld the values in Poland which are necessary for the judiciary in that country to apply the rule of law without fear or favour.

Jette Christensen, Member of Parliament in Norway, explained her reason for the nomination as the importance of the rule of law for preservation of common peace. The nomination has been endorsed by the German Judges Association, the Presidency Committee of the IAJ, and at the recent assembly of the European Association of Judges.

The rule of law is important to the preservation of peace. Its guarantee of peace is by independent judges applying the rule of law without fear or favour. IUSTITIA has been a strong and vocal voice in Poland to remind us all of the importance of independent judges in applying the rule of law for the good of all. We endorse without reservation the nomination.



The Hon. C. T. Pagone QC  
President, International Association of Judges

**Other activities of the EAJ*****Forum for Judges in Europe***

The Presidents of the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary (ENCJ) and of the European Judges Association (EAJ) drafted a letter on the recent decision to set up a Forum for Judges in Europe. The letter was sent to the Ministers of Justice of the Trio Presidency of EU (Germany, Portugal and Slovenia). The text of the letter is available here: [https://www.iaj-uim.org/iuw/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ENCJ\\_EJA-letter-to-Trio-presidency-18-January-2021-Public.pdf](https://www.iaj-uim.org/iuw/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ENCJ_EJA-letter-to-Trio-presidency-18-January-2021-Public.pdf).

***EU Judicial Networks***

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 a second meeting of the Presidents of the EU Judicial Networks took place. In attendance were Mr Filippo Donati, President of the ENCJ, Mr Jean-Claude Wiwinius, President of the Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the European Union and Mr José Igreja Matos, President of the European Association of Judges, Ms. Monique van der Goes and Ms. Aleksandra Switalska, ENCJ Office.

On 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2020, organized by the European Network of Councils of the Judiciary, the European Association of Judges (EAJ) participated on a virtual meeting along with the Association of the Councils of State and Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions of the EU (ACA-Europe) and the Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the European Union (RPCJSUE). The four judicial networks that represent the EU Judges decided to engage in a closer and more fruitful cooperation for the challenging times ahead. The European Association of Judges underlines the importance of this starting partnership with such relevant institutions and expresses its commitment to speak with one voice, the voice of judges, on certain fundamental items for the future of Europe. These meetings will now be held on a monthly basis.

***“Ways to Brussels” WG of the EAJ***

On 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 a document prepared by the “Ways to Brussels” Working Group of the European Association of Judges was issued and spread among Member Association. The texts concern the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European production and preservation orders for electronic evidence in criminal matters.

***Poland***

On 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 IAJ and EAJ issued a Press Release to endorse the nomination of Polish Association “IUSTITIA” to the Nobel Peace Prize (see above).

On 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2021, a webinar on Poland, co-organised by our Polish member (IUSTITIA) and the EAJ (European Association of Judges), took place on the zoom platform. Topic of the event was: “The judiciary: possible ways of development. March of a Thousand Gown a year later.” More information available here: <https://www.iaj-uim.org/news/webinar-on-poland/uim.org>.

On 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2021, the IAJ Secretariat-General received the reply of Ms Ursula Von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, to a letter of the European Association of Judges (EAJ) on the situation of the judiciary in Poland.

On 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2020, the European Council sent a reply to the letter of the Platform on the situation of Polish



## RECENT ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES OF THE AFRICAN, IB.A. and A.N.A.O. R.Gs. OF THE IAJ

As far as the other three Regional Groups of the IAJ are concerned, we may mention following activities:

### African Regional Group

On **Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2021** the African Group of the IAJ hold an **online meeting** under the presidency of the Group President, IAJ Vice President Mr Djamel Ajdouni. In attendance were, beside IAJ Secretary-General Mr Giacomo Oberto and IAJ Deputy Secretary-General Mr Raffaele Gargiulo, representatives of seven African Associations: Algeria, Angola, Liberia, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Tunisia. Also the current acting President of the IBA Group, Mr Walter Barone (Brazil) attended the meeting. The Group discussed several problems related to the safeguard of judicial independence in Africa. A new meeting will be held in March, also for the appointment of two representatives of the Group within the IAJ WG on the ordinary monitoring procedure.

On **27<sup>th</sup> October, 2020** the African Regional Group of the International Association of Judges, Regional Group of the IAJ, held a **meeting, by video link**. Seven African member associations (Algeria, Angola, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia), as well as the IAJ President Tony Pagone, Vice President Duro Sessa, the Secretary-General General Oberto and the Deputy Secretary-General Raffaele Gargiulo were in attendance. The meeting was presided over by the President of the African Group, Mr. Djamel Aidouni. The meeting was an occasion to meet each other virtually during this difficult times of pandemic, which are affecting everyone and also an opportunity to exchange news and make some proposals in the promotion of the independence of the judiciary in Africa.

On 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 the African Regional Group of the IAJ issued a **resolution concerning the situation in Senegal**, where a disciplinary procedure was brought against Mr Souleymane Téliko, President of the Union of Senegalese Judges (UMS). The UMS is member of the African Group, Regional group of the International Association of Judges. The resolution has been spread among the members of the African group and sent to public authorities in Senegal.

### Ibero-American Group

On 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 an on-line meeting of the IBA Group was held online, under the presidency of the acting Representative of the Group, Mr Walter Barone.

On 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2021 the Ibero-American Group of the IAJ issued a statement on the reduction of salaries of judges in Bolivia.

On 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2020, the Ibero-American Group (IBA) of the IAJ held a brief **videoconference on the Zoom platform** to take note of the resignation of the President of the Group, Mr Rafael de Menezes. All the IBA delegates thanked Mr de Menezes for his excellent work and unanimously decided to appoint his Brazilian colleague, Mr Walter Barone, as interim acting Representative of the Group. Mr Barone declared to be honoured with the nomination and accepted the post. The interim Representative will carry out his duties until the next elections to the IAJ Presidency Committee. The General Secretariat and the Presidency Committee of the IAJ congratulated Mr Barone wishing him every success.

On 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 the Ibero-American Group of the IAJ adopted a **statement** to support judicial independence in **Spain**.

On 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2020: The *Federacion Latinoamericana de Magistrados* – FLAM- adopted a **statement on the independence of justice in Argentina**.

### ANAO Group

Former IAJ Vice President and ANAO Regional Group President **Justice Louise Mailhot** (Canada) has been awarded as a Member of the Order of Canada: <https://www.gg.ca/en/honours/recipients/146-108424>. The Order of Canada (French: Ordre du Canada) is a Canadian national order and the second highest honour for merit in the system of orders, decorations, and medals of Canada. It comes second only to membership in the Order of Merit, which is the personal gift of Canada's monarch <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/medals/medals-chart-index/member-order-canada-cm.html>. Louise Mailhot (Montréal, Que.) was awarded "For her contributions to the judicial profession, notably for her advocacy of gender equality and the promotion of women in the field". In 2012 she had been awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal. The news has been published in many media:

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/trailblazing-women-rock-singer-former-chief-among-new-order-of-canada-appointments/ar-BB1cluUm> ;

outlets

<https://www.thestar.com/politics/2020/12/30/the-names-and-citations-of-the-new-members-of-the-order-of-canada.html>

The IAJ Presidency Committee and Secretariat-General congratulate Louise Mailhot—who is currently one of the official IAJ representative before the UN Offices—on this exceptional achievement.

## RECENT CO-OPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL BODIES



### UN

In December 2020 the **CoNGO** issued an official statement on the role of NGOs and their relations to the UN. A hundred NGOs related to the United Nations joined CoNGO—the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations—in a statement reaffirming the importance of NGO access to and at the United Nations. More NGOs are expected to endorse the statement. CoNGO issued the statement on the eve of two important meetings at the United Nations this week, the UN General Assembly Special Session in response to the corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on 3 to 4 December 2020 and a panel discussion dealing with strengthening participation, protection and participation of civic space. The Statement was endorsed also by the IAJ, which is member of CoNGO and has a consultative status at the ECOSOC.

### CCJE

On November 6th, 2020, the Consultative Council of European Judges of the Council of Europe approved **its Opinion No. 23 (2020) on “The role of associations of judges in supporting judicial independence”**. The preliminary draft of this Opinion had been prepared by the expert appointed by the Council of Europe, IAJ Honorary President Gerhard Reissner. The present Opinion represents a landmark for the affirmation of Judicial Associations at national and international level. It is a very welcomed standard that definitively underlines the crucial importance of judicial associations on promoting judicial independence and upholding the Rule of Law. The European Association of Judges publicly acknowledged the leading role of CCJE on matters related to the independence, impartiality and competence of judges and encourages all Member States of CoE to observe and follow the recommendations issued on the present Opinion. The Opinion is available here: <https://rm.coe.int/opinion-23-en-ccje-2020/1680a03d4b>.

### OSCE

The European Association of Judges (EAJ) has developed, in recent months, a close and fruitful cooperation with OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in order to produce **a beneficial document regarding the functioning of courts during the Covid 19 pandemic**. The final purpose was, essentially, to provide an overview of challenges faced by courts during and in the aftermath of the pandemic, to reflect on emergency measures imposed during March and July 2020 and to offer some preliminary guidance also sharing the experiences and conclusions of judiciaries in different countries. An advanced draft of this document, in the format of a meeting report, was produced by OSCE/ODIHR and drew upon a multitude of online meetings and numerous bilateral conversations and correspondence, amended by comprehensive desk-based research. As kindly recognized by OSCE/ODIHR, the European Association of Judges was a very active partner since the very beginning of the project providing its valuable know-how and expertise. Taking in proper consideration the level of uncertainty experienced by all judiciaries in this times of pandemic and the urgent need of guidance – or, at least, of a more thorough and detailed knowledge about the responses of European judiciaries to this crisis – a draft report was sent to all the EAJ members in September. While a final version of the meeting report has now been finalized by ODIHR. Please find hereinafter the link to it: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/469170>. On October 14th, 2020, an online event entitled “Defending and promoting rule of law principles: Challenges and ways forward rule of law” was held by the OSCE (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, ODIHR). Mr Igreja Matos, First Vice President of the IAJ and President of the EAJ participated in the event.

**EU**

In a letter of 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2020, the EU Commissioner for Justice, Mr Didier Reynders, officially thanked the EAJ and its President IAJ Vice President José Igreja Matos, for the valuable contribution of the European Association of Judges to **the first annual Rule of Law Report** adopted by the Commission on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

**EuLawINEn Project**

Under the financial support of the European Union – 2014-2020 Justice Programme of the European Commission – the *Fondazione Italiana del Notariato*, as Coordinator, and the partners – the Notary Chamber of Bulgaria, the Hungarian Chamber of Civil Law Notaries, the International Association of Judges and the Cassa Nazionale del Notariato (Italian Pension's Fund) – successfully completed a two-year Project titled “EU Law Training in English Language: Blended and Integrated Content and Language Training for European Notaries and Judges – EULawInEN”.

For more information on the related events see:

[https://www.iaj-uim.org/?post\\_types=page%2Cnews%2Cmediagallery&s=%E2%80%9CEULawInEN%E2%80%9D+project%3A](https://www.iaj-uim.org/?post_types=page%2Cnews%2Cmediagallery&s=%E2%80%9CEULawInEN%E2%80%9D+project%3A).

A particular mention must be made to the main publication foreseen in the project which is an Handbook comprising EU law content and English language terminology in line with the needs highlighted in the project, during the other planned activities' implementation; see:

<https://eventi.nservizi.it/upload/223/altro/handbook%20def.pdf>.