



Looking towards the 67th Annual Meeting



Dear Colleagues,

“In 2023, most of the world’s countries experienced a decrease in the rule of law, and in the same year, the ability of judiciaries to effectively check excesses by other government branches fell in fifty-six percent of countries. This worldwide phenomenon threatens to destabilize and undermine the global commitment to democracy and to inalienable human rights that serve as the foundation for freedom, justice, and peace in the world”.

This excerpt of an article published in our web site (see <https://www.iaj-uim.org/iuw/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/76RutgersULRev-2.pdf>) describes in a perfect way the challenges our judiciaries have to face in these troubled times. One of the authors of that important essay will be among IAJ’s guests of honour at our Baku meeting in October. In fact, Professor Margaret Satterthwaite, UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, will meet the delegations attending that event. In the same way she did last year in Cape Town, Professor Satterthwaite will address the Central Council and make a presentation during our International Conference focused on the relations between the judiciary and the other powers of the State.

Moreover, during its last meeting in June, the Presidency Committee decided to award Prof. Satterthwaite our IAJ “Judicial Independence Prize”, for her outstanding commitment to the cause of judicial independence as one of the pillars of the Rule of Law. The other nominee is Justice Norma Lucía Piña Hernández, Chief Justice of the Mexican Supreme Court of Justice of Mexico, who courageously fought the recent reform of the Mexican judicial system: a reform against which the IAJ had issued a very

strong declaration in August 2024 (<https://www.iaj-uim.org/iuw/iaj-presidency-committee-statement-on-mexico/>).

Despite such increasing difficulties, we must recognise that the judiciary is not alone. Among the existing signs of hope I would like to mention the action of the American Bar Association, which clearly advocates the respect, at any level, for the principle of separation of powers (see e.g. <https://www.iaj-uim.org/iuw/american-bar-association-files-suit-to-halt-government-intimidation-of-lawyers-and-law-firms/>).

Other events will mark the Baku meeting, such as the vote on the admission of a very important African country like Nigeria and the election of IAJ Officials.

I know very well that current times are characterised by a high degree of uncertainty. Yet, I can assure you that the wonderful organization team of the Union of Azerbaijan Judges is working very hard, in perfect cooperation with this Secretariat-General, in order to guarantee the best security conditions and the most efficient organisational environment for a very fruitful work of all our bodies: Central Council, Presidency Committee, Regional Groups, Study Commissions, Council of Honorary Presidents.

Therefore, I am looking forward to meeting you all in Baku. The world wide judicial family needs now, more than ever, the enthusiastic commitment of each and any of us!

Kind regards,



Giacomo Oberto
Secretary-General of the IAJ

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MEETING OF THE PRESIDENCY COMMITTEE IN NAPLES (June 2025)



On 20 and 21 June, 2025, the IAJ Presidency Committee held its springtime meeting in **Naples (Italy)**. Among the different items on the agenda, we may mention the organisation of the next IAJ annual meeting and of the international conference in Baku, the preparation of the next elections of the IAJ Officials, the 2025 edition of the “Judicial Independence Award”, the budget of the IAJ, the relations of IAJ with other NGOs and international organisations, etc.

MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF JUDGES – Yerevan (May 2025)



On 8-10 May, 2025, the mid-year meeting of the **European Association of Judges**, European Regional Group of the IAJ, took place in Yerevan (Armenia) with the attendance of the **President of the IAJ Mr. Duro Sessa**, the **First Vice-President and President of the IBA Group Mr. Walter Barone**, **IAJ Honorary President Mr. Geri Reissner**, the **EAJ President and IAJ Vice-President Mr. Mikael Sjöberg**, the **IAJ Vice-Presidents Ms. Sabine Matejka and Mr. Roland Kempfle**, the **IAJ Secretary-General Mr. Giacomo Oberto** and the **IAJ Deputy Secretary-General Mr. Raffaele Gargiulo**. In attendance were representatives of **34 European Member Associations of the IAJ**. The meeting was hosted by the **Armenian Association of Judges**.

The debates focused on several items of the agenda. Among them the situations of the judiciary in **Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Montenegro**.

The assembly heard and discussed as well the reports from the three permanent Working Groups of the EAJ: the **Working Group on the situation of Member Associations**, the **“Ways to Brussels” Working Group** and the **Working Group on “Judicial Salaries and Pensions”**.

The event was preceded by an **international conference**, on 8th May 2025, on the subject *“Justice for Judges Safeguarding Judicial Independence”*.

MEETING OF THE ANAO REGIONAL GROUP – Toronto (May 2025)



On 14-16 May, 2025, the 2025 mid-year meeting of the Asian, North American and Oceanian (ANAO) Regional Group of the IAJ took place in Toronto (Canada), according to the following [Program](#). The meeting was presided over by IAJ Vice-President, President of the ANAO Group, Ms. Allyson Duncan. In attendance was also the IAJ Secretary-General Mr. Giacomo Oberto, as well as delegates from Australia, Canada, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Rep. of China – Taiwan, and U.S.A.

The educational part of the event comprised following presentations:

Associate Chief Justice for Ontario Superior Court, **The Honourable Faye McWatt**
Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs, **Marc Giroux**

Module #1

Maintaining and Enhancing Respect for Judicial Officers and the Impact of Social Media

Professor Michael Geist of Ottawa University

Senator Pierre Moreau: [Presentation of bill S-291 – An Act to Establish Judicial Independence Day](#)

Module #2

Strategies to Deal with Backlogs and Delays in the court system

a) European experience – **Giacomo Oberto:** [Presentation](#)

b) Role of ADR part 1 – **Allyson Duncan:** [Presentation](#)

c) Role of ADR part 2 – **Grace Yin-Lun Lin**

The Honourable Michael Tulloch, Chief Justice for Ontario

Ian McDougall, President, Lexis Nexis Rule of Law Foundation

MEETING OF THE AFRICAN REGIONAL GROUP – Casablanca (April 2025)



On 21-25 April, 2025, the mid-year meeting and educational session of the **African Regional Group of the IAJ** took place in Casablanca (Morocco). During the opening ceremony, on 21st April, the **President of the African Group Ms. Marcelle Kouassi** and the **Secretary-General of the IAJ Mr. Giacomo Oberto** took the floor, as well as the **Chief Justice of Morocco**, the **Prosecutor General** of the Country, as well as the **President of the Amicale Hassania des Magistrats du Maroc**.

On 22nd April the meeting of the Group took place under the Presidency of Ms. Kouassi and with the attendance of Secretary-General Giacomo Oberto, Deputy Secretary-General Raffaele Gargiulo and the delegates of 15 African Member Associations and 2 observers, Nigeria and Sudan.

Among the different topics discussed by the Assembly we may mention the reports on the situation of the judiciaries in concerned African countries, the election of a member of the IAJ's Assistance Fund for Judges and the Election of the Group's preferred candidate as IAJ Vice – President. Information was also provided on the budget of the Group as well as on the associations which have not paid their contributions for several years.

In the IAJ's web site are available the texts of the interventions of [Ms. Kouassi](#) and of [Mr. Oberto](#).

MEETING OF THE IBERO-AMERICAN GROUP – Quito (May 2025)



On 26-28 May, 2025, the 2025 mid-year meeting of the **Ibero-American (IBA) Regional Group of the IAJ** took place in **Quito** (Ecuador), according to the following [Program](#).

The meeting was presided over by **IAJ First Vice-President, President of the IBA Group, Mr. Walter Barone**. In attendance were also the **IAJ Secretary-General Mr. Giacomo Oberto** and **Deputy Secretary-General Mr. Galileo D'Agostino**, as well as delegates from **15 Countries**, members of the IBA Group.

Among the different topics discussed by the Assembly we may mention the reports on the situation of the judiciaries in concerned Ibero-American countries, the election of a member of the IAJ's Assistance Fund for Judges. Information was also provided on the budget of the Group as well as on the associations which have not paid their contributions for several years.

RECENT ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES OF THE IAJ AND REGIONAL GROUPS

PRESIDENCY COMMITTEE

On **20th February, 2025** a Statement was adopted by the **Presidency Committee of the IAJ**, against the sanctions addressed to the **ICC** and in favour of the constant promotion of the independence of justice.

Statement in [English](#) and [French](#).

On **10th April, 2025**, the **Presidency Committee of the IAJ** issued a **statement** expressing its support to the **U.S. Federal Judges Association (FJA)**, regarding the situation occurring to judges in the **USA**.

Statement in [English](#) and [French](#).



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF JUDGES

Hungarian Judges' March for the Rule of Law



For the first time in **Hungarian history**, judges demonstrated on Saturday, **22nd of February in Budapest** for the **independence of the judiciary**. According to media reports, several thousand people took part in the protest. The march led from Kossuth Square to the Ministry of Justice. Plaques with the inscription “*No freedom without an independent judiciary*” were intended to remind people of the judges’ demands. They demanded freedom of judicial expression and dignified remuneration.

The protest organized by the **Hungarian Association of Judges (MABIE)** was attended not only by judges and judicial employees, but also by many sympathizers, the online portal [Telex.hu](https://telex.hu) reported. There were no political symbols or party flags in the demonstration because the organizations requested them.

Representatives of the **European and International Association of Judges** also took part in the demonstration. **Duro Sessa**, President of the International Association of Judges and **Mikael Sjöberg**, President of the European Association of Judges, described the demonstration as a unique event and stressed that the participants took to the streets in the interests of the citizens. The IAJ and EAJ stressed that there must also be consultations with representatives of the judiciary before decisions are made.

We publish here the interventions of the IAJ’s and EAJ’s Presidents:

[IAJ President Sessa speech](#)

[EAJ President Sjöberg speech](#)

Statements adopted during the EAJ meeting in Yerevan

On 9 May 2025, during its meeting in Yerevan (Armenia), the **European Association of Judges** (EAJ), adopted the following **statements**:

- [Czechia](#);
- [Greece](#);
- [Hungary](#);
- [Italy](#);
- General Statement on material independence of judges: [English](#) and [French](#).

EAJ Letter of Solidarity to the Judges in the USA

On 9 May 2025, during its meeting in Yerevan (Armenia), the **European Association of Judges** adopted a **solidarity letter** to the judges in the USA.

[Letter](#).



IBEROAMERICAN GROUP

Statement against the attempt on the life of a judge in Ecuador

The **IBA group** expresses its strongest condemnation to the attempt on the life of the Judge of the Criminal Unit of Libertá, in Santa Elena, Province of Guayas, **Ecuador**, Ms. María Belén Chérrez.

Statement in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Declaration of the Iberoamerican Group on Spain

On 26th May 2025, during its meeting in Quito (Ecuador), the **Iberoamerican Group of the IAJ**, adopted a declaration on the **draft Organic Law on the Spanish Judiciary** and the risks it poses to the independence of the judiciary.

Declaration in [Spanish](#).

Statement on Argentina

The **IBA Group** adopted a **statement** on the attacks on the **Argentine** judiciary following the recent Supreme Court decision upholding the prison sentence of a former president of the Republic.

[Statement in Spanish](#).

Iberoamerican Group declaration on Ecuador

On July 2, 2025, the **IBA Group** issued a declaration in defence of **judicial independence in Ecuador**, in light of the attacks perpetrated by the **Ecuadorian Minister of the Interior** in a television interview, as well as the attacks launched by certain media outlets against specific magistrates, in both cases motivated by dissent regarding the decisions taken by those judges.

[Declaration in Spanish](#).



AFRICAN GROUP

Resolution on Tunisia

On 22nd of April, 2025, the **African Group** of the IAJ, during its meeting in **Casablanca (Morocco)**, issued an important resolution on **Tunisia**.

Resolution in [English](#) and [French](#).

RECENT ACTIVITIES AND CO-OPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL BODIES

18th Plenary Meeting of the Pilot Courts Network of the CEPEJ in Strasbourg



The **CEPEJ, European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice** of the Council of Europe, organised the **18th plenary meeting** of its Network of Pilot courts in Strasbourg, France, on 10 April 2025. Our colleague **Mr. Francesco Depasquale**, Judge from Malta, President of the CEPEJ, opened the meeting, together with **Mr. Gianluca Esposito**, Director General “Human Rights and Rule of Law” of the Council of Europe.

This CEPEJ Network of Pilot Courts, which was set up 18 years ago and meets once a year, provides a better understanding of the day-to-day functioning of the courts and promotes the exchange of good practices of the judicial systems of the Member States of the Council of Europe. The Pilot Courts may be courts of first instance or higher courts in civil, administrative or criminal matters.

This 18th plenary meeting included thematic workshops on major issues for judicial systems: work-life balance in the judiciary, effective court management, digital skills in the work environment and access to justice. These interactive sessions allowed participants to share their practices and contribute to the development of future CEPEJ tools.

Participants discussed as well the progress of the CEPEJ’s work, including priorities for 2025, trends identified during the evaluation of European judicial systems and the Resource Centre on Backlog Reduction Practices, a platform designed to help Member States deal with the backlog of pending cases. 30 Pilot Courts from 28 Countries took part in the meeting.

The EAJ was represented by the **IAJ Vicepresident Sabine Matejka** and **IAJ Secretary-General Giacomo Oberto**, in their respective qualities of member and President of the **CEPEJ-GT-SATURN Working Group**.

Link to a video on the event:

<https://vimeo.com/1093071743?share=copy>



From 4 to 6 May 2025, the **World Law Congress** took place. The **IAJ President Duro Sessa** and the **First IAJ Vice President Walter Barone** attended the event.

President Sessa chaired a panel on the *Constitutional Control of Laws* and Vice President Barone on *Security of Judges in Latin America*.

They both took part in other panels, as representatives of the International Association of Judges.

On line meetings with the UN Special Rapporteur: the use of AI in Judicial activities

In **April and May 2025**, IAJ members engaged in consultations with the **UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Professor Margaret Satterthwaite**, to inform her forthcoming thematic report on **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Judicial Systems**.

On **24 April**, IAJ members from **Latin America** participated in a virtual discussion. This was convened in partnership with the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice, and included participants from Mexico, Argentina, Costa Rica, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Panama, Chile, Ecuador and Peru. The delegates heard a special presentation on the new AI tool Sor Juana, in use in Mexico. This is currently in a pilot phase at the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation, and is designed to provide information to the public about decisions and sentencing. The delegates then had 5 minutes to present on the situation in their country, before participating in an open discussion with the Special Rapporteur.

Delegates from **Europe and North America** met with the Special Rapporteur virtually on **29 April**. Participants from Spain, the United States, Portugal, Austria, Germany, Armenia and Bulgaria were in attendance.

On **1 May**, members from **Asia and Oceania** also participated in a virtual consultation. The discussion included delegates from Kazakhstan, Mongolia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Taiwan.

Finally, on **2 May**, judges and other experts from **Africa** took part in a virtual consultation hosted by the Africa Judges and Jurists Forum. Countries represented included Kenya, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, South Africa, Malawi and Senegal, and the delegates were also joined by representatives of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the African Court on Human and People's Rights, and several NGOs.

In each of these consultations, topics addressed included the absence of specific regulatory frameworks for AI in many states; the importance of adequate resources to train judges and build their capacity, and to ensure technological tools can be developed and maintained; and the need to ensure AI does not become a substitute for human judgment. Participants noted the benefits of AI for translation and transcription and ensuring faster work flows. But there was broad agreement that AI could not replace the sensitive and nuanced work of a judge. Participants stressed the importance of a cautious approach to AI adoption, and ensuring that tools are appropriately tailored to local contexts. They agreed that it is important to continue to engage in conversation, and learn what judges in other jurisdictions are doing.

IAJ's Secretary-General Report before the 44th Plenary Assembly of the CEPEJ in Strasbourg (4 and 5 June, 2025)



On 4th and 5th June, 2025, IAJ Secretary-General **Giacomo Oberto** submitted to the **44th Plenary Assembly of the CEPEJ** a report on the activities of the **CEPEJ-SATURN WG** on the subjects of judicial time management.

An outline of this report (PPP) is available here: [report](#)

Information on the 44th Plenary Assembly of the CEPEJ available here: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/-/reforming-the-cepej-s-evaluation-of-european-judicial-systems-towards-more-up-to-date-and-dynamic-data>

At the end of the meeting, in the part of it dedicated to observers, Mr. Oberto informed the Assembly about the recent activities of the **IAJ** and of the **EAJ** (2025 mid-year Regional Groups meetings and preparation of the IAJ annual meeting in October 2025 in Baku).

ENCJ adopts Declaration of Riga “Confronting the Threats to the Rule of Law”



IAJ Vice President Roland Kempfle represented the **EAJ** at the **General Assembly of the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary (ENCJ)** that took place in **Riga from June 4th to 6th, 2025**. His opening remarks addressed current threats to the rule of law both within and outside Europe. Vice

President Kempfle recalled the Rule of Law as the very strength Europe is built upon and called for mutual cooperation of judicial associations and councils for the judiciary to tackle any threats.

The **EAJ** and the **ENCJ** have been cooperating successfully for many years. The mission of the ENCJ is to promote and protect the Rule of Law within Europe, in particular, through defending and strengthening the independence of the judiciary. The ENCJ uses various approaches and engages different tools to fulfil its mission.

This year, several critical results in promotion of the Rule of Law and strengthening judicial independence were achieved.

First, the [Declaration of Riga](#), dedicated to ‘Confronting the Threats to the Rule of Law’, was adopted. Recent political shifts, societal changes, changes in the media landscape and effects of digital advances have given rise to challenges to the Rule of Law. The declaration therefore singles out the areas, where such challenges arise from the viewpoint of Councils for the Judiciary. The following approaches to confront these challenges are identified: the necessity of constant vigilance of Councils for the Judiciary to timely identify the threats to judicial independence and the Rule of Law; building trust of society in the judiciary; telling the story of the judiciary, including, what added value an independent judiciary brings for citizens and what benefits it provides to their country’s economic welfare and stability; building and maintaining the resilience of the judiciary. Lastly, the fundamental value of solidarity among the European judiciaries is underlined.

Second, for the 5th time the ENCJ Survey among Judges on the Independence of the Judiciary was carried out in 2025. This Survey is a unique tool, which gives voice to the judges of Europe, to speak up and evaluate their own independence/independence of the judiciary and identify the existing pressures/pressure points. More than 19 thousand judges from 32 judiciaries participated in the Survey, with judiciaries of Moldova and Ukraine taking part for the first time. While the report provides numerous relevant data for each jurisdiction and is therefore an excellent tool to identify areas for improvement, the following key takings are worth mentioning:

- While judges value their independence generally positively, the trend of gradual improvement of judicial independence, observed since 2015, comes to a halt. In some jurisdictions, declines are visible;
- The Survey makes clear that tension between judiciaries and the other state powers increased in many respects, in particular: (1) lack of implementation of judicial decisions that go against the interest of government has increased, (2) working conditions, in particular the low/lagging remuneration of judges and high workload/insufficient court resources, are increasingly becoming a threat to independence (3) lack of respect for judicial independence by government and parliament is seen as an issue by many respondents;
- In most judiciaries, judges feel inappropriate pressure from the (social) media at case level. Many of them feel that their independence is not respected by/on the (social) media;
- Decisions concerning the appointment and career (promotion) of judges continue to be a point of concern. Appointment (promotion) to the Supreme Court is seen as particularly troubling in a number of jurisdictions.

The survey provides many more insights into the functioning of the judiciary at national level. It is up to the Councils for the Judiciary and other governing bodies to analyse the outcomes for their judiciaries and address the issues that are raised by the respondents. The ENCJ encourages to use the results of the Survey to draw the attention of the other state powers, on which the Councils are dependent to adopt legislation and provide resources, to underline the existing problems.

The full report is available at: https://pgwrk-websitemedia.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/production/pwk-web-encj2017-p/Report%20ENCJ%20Survey%20on%20Independence-compressed_0.pdf

Conference “Judicial Independence” in Athens



EAJ Vice President **Roland Kempfle** spoke on the Conference “*Judicial Independence*” on **June 19, 2025 in Athens**. The conference was co-organised by the **Greek Association of Judges and Prosecutors** and the Plenary of Greek Bar Associations. It focused on **current challenges to judicial independence** both in Europe and globally. Key issues discussed included systemic threats to judicial independence, the historical and ongoing quest for independent justice in Greece, the perspective of the European Court of Human Rights, and comparative insights from countries like Poland on judicial self-governance and institutional safeguards.

Speakers at the conference were:

1. **Roland Kempfle**, LL.M., Vice President of the International Association of Judges (IAJ) and the European Association of Judges (EAJ)
Topic: “Current threats to judicial independence inside and outside of Europe”
2. **Antonios Roupakiotis**, Former President of the Athens Bar Association
Topic: “Why the search for judicial independence is timeless”
3. **Ioannis Ktistakis**, President of the 3rd Section of the European Court of Human Rights, Professor of Law at Democritus University of Thrace
Topic: “The independence of Justice from the perspective of Strasbourg”
4. **Ioannis Valmantonis**, Court of Appeals Judge
Topic: “Self-governance of Justice and Independence”
5. **Bartosz Grohman**, Vice President of the Polish Bar Council, Member of the Polish Delegation to the CCBE, Advocate
Topic: “Judicial Independence – The example of Poland – Proposed solutions”.