



LEGAL PRACTITIONERS FIDELITY FUND

SOUTH AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

The International Bar Association (IBA), established in 1947, is the world's leading international organization of legal practitioners, bar associations, and law societies. It was initially formed to support the establishment of the International Court of Justice following the Second World War. The IBA plays a pivotal role in developing international law reform and shaping the future of the legal profession. It has grown to include thousands of members and regularly holds conferences to discuss a wide array of legal issues, playing a significant role in the global legal community.

The International Bar Association (IBA) Annual Conference is the leading conference for legal professionals worldwide to meet, share knowledge, build contacts and develop business.

In 2023, the conference was held in Paris, France with sessions on gender equality, the role of the International Bar Association (IBA) in legal careers, the integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards in business, human rights and the rule of law with a focus on current global crises, and the challenges of climate change justice.

Other key discussions revolved around the impact of artificial intelligence in law, the importance of inclusivity regarding disability and law, and the safety and freedom of journalists. The conference highlighted the dynamic role of law in addressing global challenges and advocating for social change and justice.

In attendance was a delegation from South Africa which included:

- The Practitioners' Fidelity Fund Delegation: Chairperson, Sophie Thabang Peppy Kekana and CEO, Motlatsi Molefe.
- The LPC delegation included Chair of the LPC, J K Myburgh and H K Matolo-Dlephu.

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- The LSSA delegation included president of the organisation, Ms Eunice Masipa

As an attendee of the conference, we managed to enjoy different views on topics discussed, some of them being:

1. GENDER EQUALITY IN LAW

Emma Watson's segment on gender equality in the legal profession passionately advocated for a more inclusive and balanced approach. She emphasised the critical role of men in this endeavour, advocating for their active support in both professional and personal spheres. Her call to action urged a collective effort to dismantle traditional gender roles and biases, fostering a more equitable environment in the legal field. This highlighted the need for societal change, recognising that gender parity is a shared responsibility across gender boundaries.

2. LEGAL INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

The Legal Industry Insights session captured diverse viewpoints from legal professionals about the International Bar Association's (IBA) impact on their careers. These insights revealed how the IBA keeps them globally connected, informed about international legal trends, and enriched with new professional insights. This collective perspective underlines the IBA's critical role in fostering professional development and navigating the complexities of a globalised legal landscape.

3. SUSTAINABILITY AND ESG

In the Sustainability and ESG discussion, the complexities and opportunities of integrating Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards into business practices were examined. It highlighted the pivotal role of private markets in driving ESG initiatives, discussing the challenges and opportunities businesses face, such as improved sustainability, ethical operations, and corporate governance. This session



emphasised the growing importance of ESG in contemporary business practices and the expectation for companies to positively impact societal and environmental issues.

4. HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW

The session on Human Rights and Rule of Law addressed the International Bar Association's (IBA) proactive approach to human rights violations and enforcing the rule of law, especially focusing on recent global crises like those in Ukraine and Afghanistan. It discussed the IBA's initiatives in these regions, highlighting the need for legal support and advocacy in politically and socially tumultuous areas. This session showcased the IBA's dedication to upholding human rights standards and maintaining the rule of law, illustrating the crucial role of legal professionals and organisations in addressing global conflicts and crises.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE JUSTICE

The Climate Change Justice session delved into the legal challenges and potential solutions related to climate change, emphasising the right to a healthy environment and advocating for justice for communities most affected by environmental changes. The discussion focused on ensuring environmental justice, particularly for vulnerable communities that bear the brunt of climate-related impacts, highlighting the importance of environmental law in addressing the global climate crisis and advocating for legal measures to safeguard environmental health and promote fairness.

6. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN LAW

The Artificial Intelligence in Law segment critically examined the growing impact of AI in the legal sector, raising essential ethical concerns and stressed the need for oversight and regulation to protect human rights. It discussed the integration of AI technologies in legal practices, highlighting the importance of maintaining human judgment and control amidst rapid technological advancements. This segment



underscored the legal profession's need to adapt to AI challenges, ensuring ethical standards are met and fundamental human rights are respected.

7. DISABILITY AND LAW

This segment featured RJ Mitte, who critically intersected legal issues and disability. In this session, Mitte focused on the importance of inclusivity in the legal profession and its broader societal implications. It underscored the need for the legal system and workplaces to be more accommodating and aware of the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, shedding light on the importance of creating an inclusive legal environment that supports the rights and needs of people with disabilities.

8. MEDIA FREEDOM AND JOURNALISTS' SAFETY

The Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety formed part of the sessions in the IBAs conference due to the critical role journalists play and the increasing risks journalists face globally, emphasising the need for effective legal protection and support to ensure their safety and freedom of the press. The session highlighted international law's role in providing safeguards against media freedom threats, stressing the importance of a global framework that supports and protects journalists. This discussion brought attention to the increasingly perilous environment journalists operate in and the imperative for legal systems worldwide to provide more robust protection.

9. CONCLUSION

The collection of segments from the International Bar Association conference offered a comprehensive overview of critical issues in the legal field. The conference emphasised the legal profession's responsibility in addressing global challenges such as gender equality, AI ethics, environmental justice, and media freedom. They illustrated a collective understanding that legal frameworks must evolve to accommodate changing societal needs and technological advancements. The



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conference served as a platform for legal experts to discuss, debate, and propose solutions, reinforcing the idea that law is a dynamic tool for social change and justice.