



## NEWS RELEASE

### **INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION** **the global voice of the legal profession**

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## **New website launched to provide guidance in resolving disputes between business and society**

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Today the **International Bar Association** (IBA) announces a new wiki-style website at **BASESwiki.org**. Developed as a global, web-based, searchable database, this virtual resource will improve access to non-judicial methods of resolving disputes between companies and society. **BASESwiki.org** also serves as a learning centre for anyone interested in how to resolve these disputes outside a courtroom.

**BASESwiki.org** will also increase public understanding as to how the various mechanisms are viewed by key stakeholder groups, what patterns are emerging in settled disputes, and how these might impact the development of policies, procedures and standards in order to prevent future disputes.

The website was developed in response to the findings of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Business and Human Rights, Professor John Ruggie, who reported, after three years of research and consultation, that there are a growing number of methods and systems for companies and their external stakeholders to address such disputes, but many who might benefit from their use are not aware of them. It is critically important for those who can benefit from the various tools to know how to access them, how they function, what types are most effective in particular circumstances (investigation, mediation, arbitration, adjudication etc), and the outcomes.

The response was coordinated by Harvard University's John F Kennedy School of Government, the IBA and the World Bank Group Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman. Expected contributors include corporate counsel, academic institutions, think tanks, international NGOs, business and legal associations, and dispute resolution organisations.

John Sherman, Co-Chair of the IBA Corporate Social Responsibility Committee, has supported and advised on Professor Ruggie's work over the last three years on this subject. He commented, '*[BASESwiki.org](http://BASESwiki.org) is an extremely important development because it helps to address the lack of access to non-judicial mechanisms for resolving disputes between business and society, which undermines the rule of law. This comprehensive and interactive website will benefit many in global society by spreading information about dispute resolution resources to those who need it. The beneficiaries will include companies and the people and communities they affect, as well lawyers, courts, dispute resolution professionals, non-governmental organisations, environmental bodies, academics and government officials. Over time, the increased information will help to reduce the critical deficiency in awareness and facilitate the prompt and fair resolution of disputes between business and society.*

Gonzalo Guzmán, IBA Project Lawyer, commented, '*The wiki is an innovative and intuitive tool that allows more immediate and direct interaction and participation from contributors around the world. We expect to cover a broad range of mechanisms in more than 120 jurisdictions by the end of 2009, and we urge all experts and people interested in dispute resolution to participate and develop [BASESwiki.org](http://BASESwiki.org).*

**ENDS**

**For further information please contact:**

**Romana St. Matthew - Daniel  
International Bar Association**

Press Office  
10th Floor  
1 Stephen Street  
London W1T 1AT  
United Kingdom

Direct Line: +44 (0)20 7691 6837  
Main Office: +44 (0)20 7691 6868  
Mobile: +44 (0)7940 731915  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7691 6544

E-mail: [romana.daniel@int-bar.org](mailto:romana.daniel@int-bar.org)  
Website: [www.ibanet.org](http://www.ibanet.org)

## Notes to the Editor

- The 'BASES' in BASESwiki.org is an acronym for Business And Society Exploring Solutions.
- The IBA is collaborating with the United Nations, the World Bank Group and the Harvard University John F Kennedy School of Government in the development of **BASESwiki.org**, following a 2008 report on business and human rights by Professor John Ruggie, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Business and Human Rights. Professor Ruggie identified '*the governance gaps created by globalization - between the scope and impact of economic forces and actors, and the capacity of societies to manage their adverse consequences*', as part of the reason for the need to improve access to solutions.
- **BASESwiki.org** will have links to other sites with relevant data.
- Currently, **BASESwiki.org** is accessible in English, French and Spanish. Chinese, Russian and Arabic portals are to follow.

## About the International Bar Association the global voice of the legal profession

The **International Bar Association** (IBA), established in 1947, is the world's leading organisation of international legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies. Its membership includes over 30,000 lawyers and nearly 200 bar associations and law societies spanning every continent. The IBA influences the development of international law reform and shapes the future of the legal profession throughout the world.

The IBA's administrative office is in London; regional offices are located in São Paulo, Brazil and Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Grouped into two divisions – the **Legal Practice Division** and the **Public and Professional Interest Division** – the IBA offers its members access to leading experts and up-to-date information across all areas of legal practice and professional interest. Through a network of specialised committees, the IBA enables an exchange of information and opinions regarding laws, practices and professional responsibilities pertaining to the practice of law globally. High-quality publications and world-class conferences further provide unrivalled professional development and networking opportunities for legal practitioners and professional associates.

The IBA's **Bar Issues Commission** provides a forum for IBA member bar associations and law societies to discuss any matter relating to law at an international level.

The IBA's **Human Rights Institute** works to promote, protect and enforce human rights under a just Rule of Law, and to preserve the independence of the judiciary and the legal profession worldwide.

In partnership with the **Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa**, the IBA created the **Southern Africa Litigation Centre**, based in Johannesburg, South Africa, to promote human rights and the Rule of Law in Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The IBA was instrumental in establishing the **International Legal Assistance Consortium** in Stockholm, Sweden. This global consortium of non-governmental organisations provides

technical legal assistance to post-conflict countries. Through a grant-funded project, the IBA also maintains an office in The Hague which manages the IBA's **International Criminal Court (ICC) Monitoring and Outreach Programme**. This office follows the work and proceedings of the ICC, focusing primarily on the fair trial rights of the accused and the manner in which the Rome Statute and other legal documents of the Court are implemented as well as promoting greater understanding of the work of the Court among the IBA membership network worldwide.

**Contact information:**

**International Bar Association**

10th Floor

1 Stephen Street

London W1T 1AT

United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 7691 6868

Fax: +44 (0)20 7691 6544

Website: [www.ibanet.org](http://www.ibanet.org)