

## *The World Justice Project*

*“Rule of Law” refers to a rules-based system of self-government with a strong and accessible legal process. It features a system based on fair, publicized, broadly understood and stable laws; and diverse, competent and independent lawyers and judges. The rule of law is the foundation for sustainable communities of opportunity and equity.*

### THE RULE OF LAW MATTERS

We live in a world with a rule of law deficit. This shortcoming undermines efforts to ensure basic human security, fight poverty, eradicate corruption, improve public health and enhance public education. On the other hand, communities that adhere to and invest in the rule of law can minimize these problems and indeed offer sustainable economic opportunity and fair government. We all are stakeholders in advancing the rule of law.

### WORKING TOGETHER ON THE RULE OF LAW

#### *International Rule of Law Symposium, November 2005*

In an effort to explore how individuals and organizations – governmental and non-governmental – can strengthen efforts to advance the rule of law around the world, the American Bar Association, together with other organizations committed to advancing the rule of law, convened an International Rule of Law Symposium in Washington, D.C. in November 2005. The Symposium witnessed a remarkable gathering of 400 leaders from 40 countries in the fields of business, government, law, public health, civil society, international development, and others.



Supreme Court Justices Anthony Kennedy, Sandra Day O'Connor, and Stephen Breyer at ABA Int'l Rule of Law Symposium session moderated by Judge Robert Henry.

Panelists and attendees shared their insights about the nexus between the rule of law and poverty, violence, corruption, public health, and economic opportunity. The Symposium had numerous highlights, including a panel discussion with U.S. Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Stephen G. Breyer and Anthony M. Kennedy on the rule of law and the judiciary, and keynote speeches by, among others, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. At the Symposium's close, Philippines Chief Justice Hilario Davide's declaration that a "Rule of Law Movement" had been launched was met with a standing ovation.

## ***ABA-IBA Rule of Law Symposium: A Plan of Action, September 2006***

In March 2006, Symposium Honorary Co-Chair Justice O'Connor invited a group of leaders composed largely of November 2005 Symposium participants to attend a half-day discussion on ways to capitalize on the momentum generated by the Symposium. Among other things, the International Bar Association and the ABA agreed to jointly convene a follow-on Symposium in Chicago in September 2006, the chief aim of which was to develop a more robust commitment on the part of the world's legal profession to advance the rule of law worldwide. That symposium led to the creation of working groups to promulgate policy papers for adoption by national bar associations worldwide. The ABA is holding a meeting in April 2007 to discuss the white papers that have since been developed outlining what the ABA can do in the areas of economic development, trafficking of women and girls, corruption, independent judiciary, corporate responsibility and the environment.

### **STRENGTHENING THE RULE OF LAW MOVEMENT: THE WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT**

The Rule of Law Symposia held in November 2005 and September 2006 have raised awareness of the importance of the rule of law and energized much of the core constituency for this cause. The challenge now is to expand this constituency and give it the data, tools, and other resources necessary to strengthen the rule of law. Discussions at the symposia suggested an inclusive approach to advancing the rule of law worldwide and pointed to four follow-on initiatives, including a World Justice Forum. These initiatives comprise the near-term work of the World Justice Project (WJP).

#### **"Mainstreaming" the Rule of Law**

Many people do not make the connection between the rule of law and their daily lives – their safety, jobs, health, education, and infrastructure. People outside of the legal profession, government, and the development community must understand the centrality of the rule of law to addressing the issues they care about most. The rule of law must be "mainstreamed" into the thinking and activities of other disciplines.

The WJP will engage leaders from other disciplines, including architecture, business, education, engineering, environment, human

rights, labor, media, the military, public health, public safety/law enforcement, and religion, through multidisciplinary outreach conferences in the United States and abroad. The WJP held a national, U.S.-based multidisciplinary meeting on February 28, 2007, and will work with state and local bar associations in the United States to organize similar meetings with state leaders in five pilot states. The WJP will also hold international multidisciplinary meetings in Europe and Africa in July 2007 and Asia and Latin America in September 2007.

These outreach meetings will explore how the rule of law impacts different disciplines' work and will create the basis for collaboration among these disciplines to advance the rule of law. The WJP expects these meetings to begin a sustained dialogue among various disciplines about the implementation of the rule of law.

#### **The Rule of Law Index: Defining and Assessing the Rule of Law**

A broadly accepted definition of "the rule of law" is needed, as is a means by which to measure adherence around the globe. Currently, although many organizations do excellent work measuring aspects of the rule of law, no organization comprehensively measures and reports on the status of the rule of law. The WJP has a "beta test version" of a Rule of Law Index that will be vetted and enhanced at the multi-disciplinary meetings and other hearings. The WJP will use these hearings to develop Version 1.0 of the Rule of Law Index by autumn 2007. It will be applied in five countries, refined into a Version 2.0 and run in five additional countries. The data gathered from Versions 1.0 and 2.0 will be used to develop Version 3.0 of the Index, which will be the subject of a plenary session at the World Justice Forum in spring 2008.

#### **Scholarship Regarding the Importance of the Rule of Law**

Although research and anecdotal evidence suggest a relationship between the rule of law and communities of opportunity and equity, there is a need for more rigorous scholarship about how and why the rule of law may be important to communities. To foster scholarly discussion of the rule of law, the WJP will convene a workshop of leading academics from different fields in summer 2007. Following the workshop, participating scholars will write academic papers on the rule of law from the perspective of their areas of expertise. These papers will be published before the World

Justice Forum in spring 2008 and will be the subject of a plenary session there.

The WJP expects discussions at the Forum to develop into plans for a comprehensive, definitive study of the rule of law's relationship to achieving public benefits such as enhanced public safety, reduced poverty, decreased corruption, improved public health and greater access to education.

### **World Justice Forum**

Although the rule of law receives considerable attention in a variety of global events, there is no meeting regularly devoted to this critical subject. The WJP will convene a *World Justice Forum* in

spring 2008, an event that will launch a sustained commitment by governmental and non-governmental actors to take concrete actions to advance the rule of law throughout the world. At the Forum, leaders from diverse sectors and disciplines will share perspectives, garner commitments from various organizations and policy-makers to prioritize the rule of law, and devise and implement collaborative programs to advance this cause. The Forum will serve both as an educational event and an incubator for new and enhanced programs to advance the rule of law.

*For more information about the World Justice Project, please contact Claudia Dumas at [dumasc@staff.abanet.org](mailto:dumasc@staff.abanet.org) or at 202-662-1037.*

