



IBA 2019

SEOUL 22-27 SEPTEMBER

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION



OFFICIAL CORPORATE
SUPPORTER



2019 Annual Conference of the International Bar Association

COEX Convention & Exhibition Center

513, Yeongdong-daero, Gangnam-gu

Seoul 06164, South Korea

Sunday 22 September 2019

BAN KI-MOON

Opening Ceremony

Welcoming Remarks

(via video)

The Honorable Mayor of Seoul, Park Won Soon,
Chair of IBA Seoul Conference Host Committee, The Hon. Song Sang Hyun,
President of International Bar Association, Horacio Bernardes Neto,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the Opening Ceremony of the 2019 International Bar Association Annual Conference.

This is the first time that this huge gathering of esteemed international lawyers has gathered in Seoul. I am simply honoured to have been invited to address such an important and influential group hailing from so many continents. I take this opportunity to applaud each of you for making the journey here, whether short or long, and I know some have been of considerable length.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our world is presently in flux. It always is, but in recent times there has been a notable acceleration. Perhaps this is due to the fact that we live in an increasingly interconnected world, where what happens on one part of our planet is immediately known and occasionally felt in another part. Under this backdrop, unfortunately, and in a relatively short period, a shrinking of civil society has occurred and the rule of law of is being eroded.

Imagine what the world would look like without the rule of law: No independent media. No freedom to assemble and protest peacefully. No freedom to think individual ideas and articulate an opinion. No independent judiciary and no independent legal profession. Just imagine that for a moment.

This erosion is happening, gradually. You are the chief guardians of the rule of law, and, in this regard, must increase your unified efforts to stand firm in halting its erosion. As we all know, the rule of law promotes inclusive economic growth and builds accountable institutions that underpin global sustainable development. It protects individuals and businesses alike.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the 8th Secretary-General of the United Nations, I am fully aware of the IBA's rich history and its founding principles. Now, I would like to briefly remind you of the establishment of the UN in 1945, the IBA in 1947, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Each were the product of like-minded individuals determined, through passion, compassion, integrity, and a guiding sense of justice to carve out a better world for our future generations. What these key institutions have in common is that they were all developed by diverse representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds hailing from all regions of the world.

As the IBA matches the UN in both structure and ambition, I believe this makes it easier to talk to you because the issues that are important to the UN are also critical to the IBA. From such topics as climate change, poverty eradication, cultural diversity, and the promotion of human rights, mental health, and gender equality; it is clear that there is much work to be done, with new challenges always emerging. However, I firmly believe that each of you will contribute in some way towards what is required in these areas. Indeed, we should be reminded of an old proverb that says, *'It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.'*

In this respect, the work of the IBA relating to business and human rights, gender equality, and climate change, as well as promoting justice and upholding the principle of accountability are all illuminated candles, and they are lit in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, I feel particularly connected to the IBA in other ways too, knowing that Mary Robinson, Chair of *The Elders*, of which I am a Deputy Chair, and the late Nelson Mandela, Founder of *The Elders*, both have longstanding links to the substantive work of the IBA. Mary Robinson is working on climate justice and Nelson Mandela was the Founding Honorary President of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to emphasise that an independent legal profession and judiciary are the cornerstone of functioning democracies, and that as much as possible needs to be done to safeguard them.

Thanks to your active participation, I am confident that this conference will be crowned with great success. Please allow me to finish by quoting the late Dr Martin Luther King who once said; *'Injustice anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere.'*

Thank you very much for your attention.

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