



2024 INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Centro Citibanamex, Av del Conscripto 311, Lomas de Sotelo, Hipódromo de las Américas, Miguel Hidalgo, 11610 Ciudad de México, CDMX, MEXICO

SUNDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2024

Almudena Arpón de Mendivil Aldama

IBA President 2023-2024

OPENING CEREMONY SPEECH

HOLA!!! BIENVENIDOS!!!

Former Mexico President, Professor Ernesto Zedillo, Minister President of the Mexican Supreme Court, Ministers of the Supreme Court, Head of the Public Registry of Property and Commerce of Mexico City representing the Honorable City Major, President of the General Council of Mexican Lawyers, President of the Mexican Bar, President of the National Association of In-house Counsel, dear colleagues and friends.

What an honour and a great pleasure to welcome you to the IBA 2024 Annual Conference as President of this great Association.

What a privilege it is to hold this flagship event for the IBA and for the entire legal profession here, in Mexico City, in *México lindo y querido*.

And what a great opportunity the Conference offers us to get inspired by this country's impressive history and culture, the beauty of this land and most of all, by the Mexican people. Mexico's blend of cultures and traditions found its expression in the murals of Rivera and the paintings of Frida; in the poetry of Sor Juana and the essays of Nobel Prize Octavio Paz. A country devoted to the Virgin of Guadalupe, that also prays to Mother Earth and Nature, a country that celebrates its past and embraces its future.

A nation that is in the constant process of remaking itself which has led to it joining the ranks of the world's largest economies; a nation which had followed a deepening process of democracy, an achievement which should not be weakened and to which I will refer later. A nation that, for the first time in 200 years of Mexican history, will have a woman, Ms. Claudia Sheinbaum, as President of Mexico. What an impact this may have to foster female gender equality, in Mexico and in the entire world; and, more broadly, what an unique occasion for the President Elect to showcase the qualities that have led her to her unprecedented victory: wisdom, independent judgement, leadership and courage, the courage to overcome adverse times governing a country with the huge potential Mexico has, under the rule of law.

Allow me to start with the acknowledgements. Thank you to the host committee led by its co-chairs, Claus Von Wobeser, Daniel del Río, Mariana Herrero, Luis Gonzalez Neves and all its members: your help on multiple fronts has been of immense value.

I thank all the senior officers: the VPs, the SG, the heads of Divisions and of the Human Rights Institute, your leadership brings us success at all IBA fronts.

Thank you to the IBA staff led by our remarkable Executive Director, Dr. Mark Ellis. They excel to make our conference not only possible, but even better every year.

However, today my special recognition goes to two groups: first, to the committee and fora officers, those who did not appear on the initial video. It is their work that allows the IBA to offer the more than 200 top sessions about the most relevant topics during our Conference week.

Last but not least, the IBA would not be at the amazing point it is today without the outstanding legacy of its past Presidents. We are honoured having with us this evening Fernando Peláez, David Rivkin, Martin Soltz and Horacio Bernardes Neto. You have our admiration. Please, dedicate to all of them the applause they so much deserve.

Now, look around you. This is very impressive. The Conference has gathered together more than four thousand lawyers from across the globe with different backgrounds, religions, legal systems, areas of practice: this Conference brings us the chance to realise the breadth and depth of our profession, and of our joint strength and power.

Thus, this gathering may not go unnoticed. My aspiration for this conference is to generate a positive impact in each of you, in the legal profession, and especially in Mexico and the Latin American Region.

The IBA presence in Mexico takes place at an historic moment and at a special day, the United Nations Day of Democracy, addressed to review the state of democracy in the world. In the Region, some countries have totally departed from democracy- Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia- whilst the erosion of democracy and of the Rule of Law is quickly spreading to other countries: Ecuador, Colombia. And Mexico, which has for years been the nation within the Region to look at, is nowadays taking steps such as the Constitutional Reform approved last week, that can risk the independence of the judiciary,

the rule of law, democracy and thus, the achievements gained for Mexican citizens in previous years with enormous effort.

I take this opportunity to strongly commend the entire Mexican legal profession and its leaders, for their outstanding, rigorous and peaceful support of the separation of powers during the reform process. Dear Mexican colleagues: you are not alone. The IBA is here with you, not only this week. We shall continue supporting you with serenity and strength.

Now, the problem of erosion of the rule of law is increasingly topical as it not only threatens democracy and human rights protection- as if those were not enough, but also sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Citizens' quality of life then becomes seriously damaged.

The legal profession can and must use its joint strength to remedy this situation. Our work impacts society. We knew so, whilst we ignored in which areas and to what extent did our work have effects. The IBA, conscious of the importance of providing evidence on how the legal profession contributes to society, has been guided by the opportunity we could create together, measuring, for the first time, the value of the rule of law and of the social and economic impact of the legal profession. With this purpose, in June this year we issued a landmark report, The IBA Impact Report.

The resulting data confirms that the efforts of the more than 12M lawyers across the planet weave the tapestry allowing the rule of law to operate at its best. I share with you three areas showing the impact of our improvement of the rule law: impact on poverty, - the informal employment of more than 60% of the total population could decrease by 34Mn people, impact on innovation – where an improvement in the rule of law could unlock an investment of 83bn USD; and impact on education, where 30% more girls could graduate from secondary education.

And so, given that we now know the impact of our work, given that we know now its scale, it is critical that we assume our responsibility of making our impact even greater. The IBA is already working towards that goal. It is committed to playing a leading role in driving a collective effort across the legal community to uphold the rule of law, in Mexico, in Latin America and across the world.

So, look around you again. Isn't this gathering even more exciting now that we are aware of its capability, of our capability to generate impact? I hope you will agree with me in that not only is it so, but that moreover, this Conference should leave a positive mark, in terms of unity of our profession and in terms of our capacity to improve society. As the song, *Ojalá que te vaya bonito*- says in the verse... *cuantas luces dejaste encendidas/ how many lights you left illuminated...*, the Conference should leave many impact lights shining, not to be easily turned off.

Que nos vaya muy bonito.

Thank you.

Almudena Arpón de Mendivil Aldama
IBA President 2023-2024