



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, Mrs 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 surely 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.

Now, allow me to refer again to the best of Mexico, its people and their generosity and please allow me to do so evoking a recent history of my family as beneficiary of such generosity. My mother's father, my grandfather was a great lawyer for the government in Spain was a liberal. He exiled after the dramatic civil war in Spain that followed the coup of the military. Aldama, my grandfather, was pursued. He reached Mexico at Tamaulipas in November 1939 with his wife and his three children, including my mother then aged seven. This was possible because of the openness policy of President Cardenas and the entire Mexican people. My family lived in Mexico City for eight years until 1948 when allowed to return to Spain. There were tears in my grandmother's eyes I have been told when she was leaving Mexico. So, Mexico is part of my life. I grew up eating guacamole and singing beautiful songs like Contigo Aprendi and reading wonderful stories, really devouring them, about Mexican Spanish history. My favourite being Jade Heart by a liberal also exiled. Today, i think Mexico for its impactful generosity for my family, and thus today I close the gratitude circle that opened back in 1939, saying gracias Mexico. Thank you.

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

I thank all the senior officers: the Vice Presidents, the Secretary General, the heads of Divisions and of the Human Rights Institute, because it is your leadership that brings success at the IBA on all fronts.

Thank you very very much to all the IBA staff led by our remarkable Executive Director, Dr Mark Ellis. The staff really do excel to make our conference not only possible, which is already quite a miracle, but to make it even better every year.

However, today my special recognition goes to two groups: the first, to the committee and fora officers, those who did not appear on the initial video, because it is their work that allows the IBA to have more than 200 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 if it were not because of the legacy of its past Presidents. We are honoured to have here with us today past presidents David Rivkin Fernando Peláez and Horacio Bernardes Neto. Michael Reynolds could not make it, the first time in 39 years and neither could Martin Šolc, and of course we are still morning the loss of the wonderful past

president Sternford Moyo. Thank you to all of you. Please, can you give them the applause they so very much deserve. Thank you.

Now, this is very impressive, look around you. 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 for the country. Also today, it is a very special day. It is the United Nations Day of Democracy. You can be very scientific, and maybe you think well this has happened a matter of chance. Really? Too many coincidences. The thing is that some countries in the [Latin American] region are totally apart from the rule of law and democracy – Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia – and 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 adopted just last week that can risk the independence of the judiciary, the separation of powers, the rule of law and democracy and thus, the achievements for Mexican citizens that have been gained with enormous effort 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 pacific defence of the separation of powers during the entire reform process. Dear Mexican colleagues: you are not alone. The IBA is here with you, not only this week as you know. We shall continue supporting you with strength and serenity.

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

The legal profession must use its joint strength to remedy this situation. Our work impacts society. We knew so, but we ignored in which areas and to which extent did our work have effect. 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 12 million lawyers across the planet weave the tapestry allowing the rule of law to flourish and democracy to operate at its best. I share with you three examples impact on poverty, the informal employment of more than 60 per cent of the total population could decrease by 34 million people; impact on innovation, an improvement in the rule of law could unlock investment of 83bn US dollars; and impact on education, where 30 per cent more girls could graduate from secondary education.

And so, given that we know the impact of our work, and given that we know now its scale, it is critical that we assume our responsibility of making our impact effective, even greater. The IBA is already working towards that goal.

So, look around you again. Isn't this gathering even more exciting, important now that we are aware of its capability, of our capability to generate impact? I hope so and I hope that you will agree with me that not only is it so, but that this Conference should leave a positive mark, in terms of unity of the profession and in terms of our capacity to improve society. As the song, *Ojalá que te vaya bonito*/I wish you well 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. Gracias.

Thank you.

Almudena Arpón de Mendivil Aldama
IBA President 2023-2024