



IARLJ

International Association of Refugee Law Judges

established at Warsaw, 18 september 1997

REGIONAL CHAPTER FOR AFRICA

HALF YEARLY REPORT FROM THE OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CHAPTER FOR AFRICA 30 JUNE 2007

Dear Colleagues

During the 7th World Conference of the IARLJ in Mexico (Nov 2006), members in attendance will recall that the Regional Chapter Meeting for Africa provided direction by way of significant resolutions aimed at strengthening the Chapter.

In summarizing, the following resolutions were adopted:

- (i) That South Africa consider hosting the next 8th Bi Annual World Conference of the IARLJ.
- (ii) A Regional Meeting be hosted by the Nigerian Judiciary within a year (2007) with a view to recruiting French speaking Judges to make the Chapter more representative and that all affiliated members will endeavour to promote membership of the IARLJ within their respective Judiciaries.
- (iii) A Conference/ Workshop for Judges from Africa will be hosted in Dublin, Ireland early in 2007 but the date was yet to be confirmed.

May it be mentioned that after a very long period, the presence of a strong delegation from Africa in the World Conference in Mexico was remarkable. The Nigerian Ministry funded a strong delegation with the Southern African

Judges being funded by the Australian Aid Agency (Aus Aid). The Chapter Meeting and the informed interaction during the Conference created a positive climate to strengthen the camaraderie in Africa alongside the international membership of the Association.

PROGRESS REPORT ON RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED

(A) 8th BI ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE IARLJ

The process kick starting the initiative was hosted when Justice Tony North, President of the IARLJ having indicated that he was scheduled to address an International Conference was willing to include a three (3) day stop over in South Africa in February 2007.

Both Mr Tjerk Damstra the Acting Chairperson of the Refugee Appeal Board and the Chairperson of the African Chapter, with the support of the South African Refugee Appeal Board Secretariat facilitated meetings with all relevant stakeholders in Pretoria who gave their support and commitment to the hosting of the Conference. High level meetings then followed in Cape Town with the Minister of Home Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee of Home Affairs, all of whom gave their unqualified support. As the meetings took place in the vicinity of the Parliament Assembly, Justice North met many Cabinet Ministers when the Parliament session adjourned.

Consequently, we prepared a Cabinet submission which the Minister of Home Affairs will table before Cabinet for formal endorsement of the hosting of the proposed Conference. The tentative date proposed for this Conference is from 24 to 26 November 2008. A further communication will be directed to all members as soon as the submission is formally approved.

(B) REGIONAL MEETING NIGERIAN JUDICIARY

We enlisted the assistance of Geoffrey Care, a former President of the IARLJ, who is well known in the Nigerian Judiciary to assist in making some tangible progress.

However as a new Chief Justice has taken over from Justice Lawal Uwais we have not secured any firm commitment from the Judiciary. The idea of a regional conference in Morocco is also mentioned here as a possible alternative with the assistance of UNHCR representative Johan van der Klaauw but the delay in implementing the resolution in respect of a Regional Meeting up North has not augered well for the Chapter's profile. Local initiative in the region is a crucial requirement and it is anticipated that those members who attended the Mexico Meeting will give greater momentum to the notion of a Regional Conference

(C) THE DUBLIN WORKSHOP FOR AFRICAN JUDGES

The workshop in Dublin Ireland was held on 25/26 April 2007. Based on our experience of the Mexico Conference and the turn out at the Dublin Conference, I have directed some of my observations to the President of the IARLJ, Justice Tony North.

What I have emphasized is that the IARLJ should preferably facilitate and identify all major Regional Conferences/ workshops specifically for Africa and post them on the IARLJ website well in advance for a specific Calendar year.

It is common knowledge that Delegates find it extremely difficult to access Regional Embassies for their visas at short notice and this problem was both visible in Mexico and in Dublin.

There was also no communication from Dublin to the Chairperson of the Regional Chapter or the Chapter Secretariat once the dates were confirmed.

The Mexico conference clearly emphasized the involvement of the Chapters on any initiative affecting a particular chapter.

Members must also note that presently there is no dedicated funding for a Secretariat. We are relying on Mr Tjerk Damstra the present Acting Chairperson of the South African Refugee Appeal Board and his Secretariat who have kindly assisted with the administrative support for which we place on record our deepest sense of gratitude.

Our gratitude is also conveyed to the President of the IARLJ, Justice Tony North for his dedicated commitment in his support for the initiatives in Africa.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Colleagues, please feel free to contact the Secretariat. Communication is vital. Your inputs despite other pressing priorities will be highly appreciated in strengthening the roots of the African Chapter.



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