



Luis María Palma, IACA President

Singapore Conference 2024 Opening Speech

Esteemed Participants, Colleagues and Friends:

Thank you so much for joining us. We are deeply honoured to hold our international conference for the first time in Singapore, allowing us to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the International Association for Court Administration (IACA) while learning from your remarkable experiences and advancements.

“Building Trust in the Judiciary” is the main theme of our gathering. Achieving this goal necessitates coming together and learning from one another.

Trust is a fundamental value for the judiciary, as it establishes its credibility within the society it serves. Nothing is more damaging than disinformation, which undermines the foundations of the judicial system. Upholding good faith, leading by example, fostering teamwork, and ensuring accountability are essential practices we must rely on. Court Administration must embody the professional development of these practices, and IACA is dedicated to continuously improving them to fulfil its mission and, in this way, to contribute to social peace.

With participation from 240 people representing 53 countries across 5 continents, we are excited to delve into this core topic.

We extend our deep gratitude to our distinguished sponsors, whose logos and names are displayed on the screens. They include:

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We greatly appreciate your trust and long-term commitment to the continuous improvement of judiciaries.

Dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaboration are operational concepts we strongly believe in and practice at IACA. While it can be challenging, it is the only effective way for us to grow and improve together. Like my Italian ancestors used to say: "Tutti i dialoghi sono difficili ma il dialogo é la cosa piu bella"; "All dialogues are difficult but dialogue is the most beautiful thing."

IACA's mission promotes professional court administration and management in emerging democracies and other countries pursuing the rule of law. We sponsor international conferences, in person and online events and forums, education, and training programs on court administration and management. Additionally, we serve as a resource for judges, court administrators, managers, and other government officials seeking ways to evaluate and improve court and justice systems.

In essence, we aim to help individuals help themselves by identifying necessities, learning from different cultures, and fostering awareness of our interdependence. This contributes to mutual understanding and social peace.

The engine of our evolution is not certainty, but doubt. Paraphrasing Lin Yutang, when he observed that we are born at every moment of our lives, we learn at every moment of our lives. Like a rider spurring his horse, new challenges arise every day, urging us to devise original and varied solutions for them. Our continuing education and mutual learning from each other tend to facilitate it. This dialectical process – "the logic of modern natural science" to which Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel referred – has no end. For all these reasons, our time learning by getting together and listening to each other does not finish by saying "goodbye", but "see you soon". Our progress, both individually and collectively, relies heavily on it.

I take the liberty to quote Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, who stated during the Opening of the Legal Year 2013 that: "The legal profession, led by the Judiciary, is the custodian of the sacred trust to uphold the rule of law. Its essence is the assurance that no one is above the law; that every citizen should have greatest equality of opportunity; and that the ideals of our national pledge should be pursued by each citizen exerting his personal efforts and relying on the strength of his abilities, not on his race, language or religion."

It is in the essence of professional court administration to contribute to make that happen. Well-trained and ethical judges need to be devoted to the core reason of their constitutional

appointment, which is to deliver justice without time consuming and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures that otherwise affect the quality and timeliness of their judgments.

As Chief Justice Wee Chong Jin said during the Opening of the Legal Year 1983, "The qualities that one should look for in a judge are a burning desire to be fair and impartial, the courage to uphold the law and strike down injustice, to have compassion coupled with an understanding of human frailties and lastly, a love for the law."

Therefore, and thanks to the excellent proposals the IACA Agenda Committee received and approved, we conceived a program where ICT and -within it- AI has a central importance, but as tool to improve the judiciary, no as an end in itself.

We need technical tools that align with our goals to deliver better justice, not the other way around. Continuous training with a problem-solving orientation, utilizing in-person, distance, and blended learning formats, is key to achieving this.

Therefore, we anticipate engaging presentations from 73 outstanding speakers addressing topics such as:

- AI governance and its impact on the justice system and the legal sector.
- Communication, disinformation and trust in the judiciary.
- Access to justice and self-representation in court proceedings.
- People-centred e-services.
- Excellence in the administration of justice, leadership and teamwork.
- Judicial administration and professional development of court administrators.
- International case studies, such as the implementation of ISO 9001:2015 Norms.

"Justice delayed is justice denied" is an old quote that countless people repeat but whose origin remains almost unknown. But not completely. In 1693, Jean de la Bruyère, the great French author and moralist wrote in an unforgettable book that I read over and over from time to time, whose title is « Les Caractères » or « Les Mœurs du Siècle » (in English "The Characters" or "The Manners of the Century") that:

« Une circonstance essentielle à la justice que l'on doit aux autres c'est de la faire promptement et sans différer : la faire attendre, c'est injustice »

That is to say:

"An essential circumstance for the justice that one owes to others is to do it promptly and without delay: to make it wait is injustice."

They faced that problem then; we face it as we speak.

Last but not least, innovation is crucial for improving the quality of justice, and it must be encouraged through public policy and law:

- Public policy should strongly support education to creatively identify, solve, and prevent problems.
- Fostering innovation through the law is crucial. As President Abraham Lincoln noted, "The patent system added the fuel of interest to the fire of genius."

And both require the judiciary to protect and enforce rights, including property rights, thereby upholding the rule of law.

Court Administration is fundamentally devoted to contributing to enhance the quality of justice making good use of both tools, education and innovation. A justice whose quality must constantly improve in parallel to its timeliness with independence and impartiality, and -as Chief Justice Menon said- without distinctions based on race, language or religion.

It is our humble and deepest desire that this Conference will contribute to these goals providing you with opportunities to bring back home fresh ideas, good practices, and new friendships.

Thank you all so, very much.