

SIDE EVENT

ILAN: STRENGTHENING THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL AID
NETWORK TO ACHIEVE JUSTICE FOR ALL

THURSDAY | MAY | 20 | 2021

2:10 PM Vienna | 9:10 AM Buenos Aires | 8:10 AM New York

Webinar (Zoom platform)

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OVERVIEW

The Federal Public Defenders' Office of Argentina is hosting a high-level event on the sidelines of the 30th Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), with support from South Africa and the United States, as well as the Asociación Interamericana de Defensorías Públicas (AIDEF), the Business Leaders for Justice Coalition, the International Legal Foundation, Legal Aid Service Georgia, and the UNODC Justice Section. This virtual convening will focus attention on the need to strengthen the International Legal Aid Network (ILAN) as a platform to achieve justice for all as envisaged in the 2030 Agenda. The event will review progress in building ILAN following on the call made by participants of the Second International Conference on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems hosted by Argentina, in light of Resolution 25/2 on "Promoting legal aid, including through a network of legal aid providers" issued at the 25th Session of the UN CCPCJ in 2016, and taking into consideration renewed calls in the Kyoto Declaration adopted at the 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice for "a specialized network of legal aid providers to exchange information and best practices and to assist each other in carrying out their work."

Around the world, there is a crisis in access to quality legal representation for poor and otherwise marginalized communities. ILAN was founded with the goal to provide a forum for diverse legal aid providers to learn from each other about how to provide the highest quality legal aid services, while achieving meaningful access to justice for all. ILAN will be an open, inclusive network led by legal aid providers, allies and experts who believe that legal aid is a fundamental right, and key to ensure equal access to justice for all. It is intended to provide a platform for legal aid providers and leaders to advocate for quality legal aid services and share expertise and experience on how to address urgent justice challenges. During this event, speakers will discuss plans to expand ILAN, including by establishing an online platform and fostering community building and continued collaboration both online and offline.

EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL AID NETWORK

In 2012, the UN General Assembly's adoption of the [United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems](#) focused the world's attention on the right to legal aid for the criminally accused, while making clear that all countries struggle to uphold that right in practice. In 2014, the first International Conference on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems was convened in Johannesburg, South Africa, bringing together over 250 high-level participants from nearly 70 countries. The event highlighted that, though levels of development and legal and cultural contexts may differ, there are common challenges to providing effective access to quality criminal legal aid services for the poor and vulnerable. Even more importantly, it showed that there are tested solutions and good practices that should be shared around the world. The subsequent Johannesburg Declaration called on legal aid providers to continue exchanging knowledge and expertise.

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In 2016, at its 25th session the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice adopted [Resolution 25/2](#) on “Promoting legal aid, including through a network of legal aid providers.” The resolution recognized that access to criminal legal aid is crucial to protecting fundamental human rights and promoting sustainable development. It also emphasized that multi-level cooperation is necessary to exchange technical expertise on common challenges and solutions, and creating a global network to facilitate cooperation would advance this agenda. The [Buenos Aires Declaration](#) emerging from the international legal aid conference hosted by the Government of Argentina later that same year called on donors, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to provide resources and support for the establishment of legal aid networks.

While the international legal aid conferences have enabled legal aid providers to come together on a biennial basis, further work is needed to fully realize the vision for the International Legal Aid Network (ILAN). Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear that creating a more robust network to foster exchange among legal aid providers and key stakeholders around the world was vitally important. During the special virtual convening of the [Fourth International Conference on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems](#) held in September 2020, participants reaffirmed the need to strengthen ILAN. The [Roadmap for Increasing Access to Justice Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) coming out of the conference stressed the need to facilitate the sharing of best practices and practical legal strategies, as well as to strengthen collaboration among legal aid providers across borders to identify, understand, and address broad patterns of human rights violations and injustice.

Discussions at the 2021 [Kyoto Crime Congress](#) reinforced the centrality of legal aid to achieving justice for all, and the [Kyoto Declaration](#) called for developing “a specialized network of legal aid providers to exchange information and best practices and to assist each other in carrying out their work.”

TOPICS AND SPEAKERS FOR THIS SIDE EVENT

Issues for presentation and discussion will include:

1. International, regional and country-level experiences in facilitating knowledge exchange and sharing of best practices among legal aid providers on how to address urgent justice challenges and strengthen the role of legal aid providers in criminal justice systems, including through the biennial International Conference on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems, and the Inter-American Association of Public Defenders (AIDEF);
2. A discussion of key components of effective, quality legal aid services, and the importance of sharing national practices and increasing international cooperation and technical assistance;

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3. How Member States, civil society organizations, international organizations, donors, and the private sector can work together to strengthen the International Legal Aid Network.

Speakers at this event will include:

Stella Maris Martínez, *Federal Public Defender General of Argentina and General Coordinator of AIDEF*.

Rachel Rossi, *Deputy Associate Attorney General - US Department of Justice*

Candice Welsch, *Deputy Director of the Division for Operations, UNODC*

Judge Motsamai Makume, *Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Legal Aid South Africa and Judge of the High Court of South Africa, South Gauteng Division.*

Diego García Sayán, *United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers*

Maha Jweied, *Senior Fellow, National Legal Aid & Defender Association (US)*.

Jennifer Smith, *Executive Director, the International Legal Foundation (moderator)*.

This event has been organized with the support of the CEJUR and the Fesudeperj of the Public Defenders' Office of Rio de Janeiro.

