

REGIONAL GROUP MEETINGS MAY- JUNE 2021

ETERNAL VIGILANCE

Thank you for the opportunity to address a few words to you at this meeting. First, let me say how pleased I am that the regional group is able to meet even if it be in this form and without the face-to-face contact of us being together in the same physical space. We lose much by not being together; we lose the casual contact and interactions that come with meeting between sessions, in corridors, and over informal meals. We often deepen our understanding of the issues on these occasions that adds so much to our work in the formal sessions and in what we pursue more broadly in the administration of justice. However, it is attribute to you that you are here in this form continuing your commitment to your role as judges, to your domestic associations, to the regional groups and more broadly to the IAJ.

We are yet to calculate the full cost of the worldwide emergency of this pandemic. Many had hoped that the emergency might have been of short duration, but well over a year has passed and we have not yet ended the restrictions. We speak now hopefully of a light at the end of the tunnel with the massive role out of vaccines, but we cannot yet be sure.

In the meantime, your work as judges needs to continue. It needs to continue, and does continue, in restricted circumstances. Your conditions are limited and affected, and the conditions and circumstances of those who come to you for justice are affected. The emergency measures in which we are living are likely to have long term consequences for you and those who come to you for justice. You are the light at the end of the tunnel for many of those people.

We have all heard it said that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, and that vigilance is something I must urge on you now as you continue to do your work in a world with restrictions imposed upon us because of the pandemic and, we hope, in a world post pandemic. In either case it will be you who continue to be the administrators of justice and to whom those who seek justice will look. You will need to be vigilant to ensure that justice is done despite the restrictions which have been imposed for the purpose of our protection. I wish you all the best in your deliberations during this meeting and in your further work as judges.

The Hon G T Pagone Q.C.

President, International Association of Judges

Rome, May/June 2021.