

Elected President of IAJ

José Igreja Matos

Esteemed Colleagues

Dear Friends

It is a great honour to be elected president of the International Association of Judges.

Being appointed as a judge in my country, thirty-one years ago, this election and the trust shown by your unanimous endorsement is a reason for humble pride and immense joy.

Allow me to thank my Portuguese Colleagues and our Portuguese association that always helped me and assisted me, during all those years, without hesitation, only with enthusiasm and companionship.

A second word of acknowledgment is addressed to all the colleagues that shared with me responsibilities as members of the Presidential Committee of IAJ and, particularly, in the Board of EAJ. In the person of Honorary President Tony Pagone, who conducted our institution during these recent difficult and challenging years, I pay my tribute to all of you.

And lastly a particular message of recognition to the judiciary of Costa Rica and in particular to the representatives of ACOJUD – the national association of judges. I personally witnessed the tremendous efforts provided by you, dear friends, to receive IAJ's General Assembly also in order to provide me the privilege of being appointed in your country.

This terrible pandemic did not allow the outcome desired by all of us. But my gratitude will be always publicly expressed.

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The next two years will be a time to reconnect; a time to resume our normal activities, in person, working together, side by side.

Our main priority will continue to be, as always, to promote judicial independence worldwide.

Rule of Law is now more endangered than ever in several regions of the globe; quoting a phrase attributed to Dante in "Divine Comedy": "The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in time of crisis preserve their neutrality." IAJ will continue to be

on the front-line of this battle to uphold an independent judiciary; make no doubt about it.

Having in mind how our organization is designed, the executive role belongs, primarily, to the four presidents of the Regional Groups and their boards. For the President of IAJ is ascribed a function of coordination of the work provided by those structures besides the representation of the institution, as a whole.

Being now more committed with the global aspects of IAJ's mission, crucial topics like international cooperation, judicial integrity, diversity and gender, along with the purpose of continuing to expand our organization, providing geographical growth and investing in regions and countries not yet covered by our activities, are pivotal to the near future.

I count particularly on the continuous dynamism and hard work provided by the 94 national associations of judges that are the "heart and soul" of IAJ, the biggest organization of the judiciary in the world.

IAJ proved its determination and resilience. Hoping that the pandemic will cease to determine our way of life, may the next few years represent the triumph of togetherness and solidarity, moving forward.

I would like to dedicate my election to the judges of Afghanistan, in particular to the women Afghan judges.

Their unimaginable ordeal is a constant reminder for all of us, particularly for international organizations, how much must be done to protect our essential values, to preserve human dignity.

Observing, with horror, the attacks on our fellow colleagues, the violence that insists and persists, the rest, all the rest, simply becomes not important.