

Speech of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Mr. Inam Karimov at the International Conference

Distinguished participants, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to welcome you to this distinguished gathering, devoted to one of the most essential pillars of democratic life: **the rule of law**.

As we know, the **separation of powers** in a democratic state is not merely a theory; it is the balance that keeps democracy alive and protects citizens from the concentration of power.

The separation of powers is, above all, about institutions, about the establishment of a constitutional order in which authority is divided, balanced, and held accountable. **Judicial power**, as one of the pillars of this structure, is vital. Its purpose is to apply the law fairly, without fear or favor, while maintaining a respectful and constructive dialogue with the executive and legislative branches.

In a true democracy, these branches are not rivals; they are partners in service - each with distinct duties, yet all guided by the same goal: to serve the people through the protection of justice and the rule of law.

However, the separation of powers is not only about institutions; it is also about individuals. Behind every institution stand those who govern it. The integrity of institutions is born of the integrity of those who lead and serve within them. No law can be truly just, and no system can endure, unless it is guided by the moral strength and conscience of those who apply it.

Judicial independence is not a privilege — it is a personal responsibility. As a safeguard, it protects citizens from arbitrariness and ensures that authority remains accountable to the law, and the law faithful to justice. It also entails accountability, which binds the judge to duty, conscience, and professional ethics. Moreover, it requires impartiality — the ability to serve without bias, prejudice, or emotion that obscures reason.

That is why the strength of a judiciary is measured not only by its laws and institutions, but also by the character and sense of duty of those who serve within it. For judicial independence does not begin in the courtroom — it begins in the integrity and inner conviction of the judge.

“If you want to rule justly, first conquer yourself.”

This idea was immortalized centuries ago by the great Azerbaijani poet and philosopher **Nizami Ganjavi**. His timeless wisdom captures the very essence of **judicial ethics** — the understanding that integrity and self-discipline are the first victories of justice.

It is in this spirit that today's conference provides a valuable opportunity to reflect on these enduring principles. Since we are all gathered here today, it is also a moment to speak not only about institutions, **but about ourselves** — **about judges**. What is our personal role in upholding the separation of powers? What are our duties? And what expectations does society place upon us?

In this regard, Azerbaijan has made significant progress on this path. Under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, the constitutional guarantor of judicial independence, our judiciary has undergone deep and lasting reforms. These reforms have strengthened the courts as the guardians of legality and the final arbiters of justice. Courts have become not merely institutions that deliver judgments, but institutions that inspire trust.

At the same time, we recognize that the journey toward justice is never complete. We all, members of the global judicial community, continue to face significant challenges. Among them are the growing pressures of populism and misinformation, improper attempts to influence judicial decisions, and the ongoing need to strengthen public trust in institutions. The rapid rise of technology, artificial intelligence, and social media brings both opportunities and risks. Climate change places new and complex burdens on the judiciary.

In this context, the **International Association of Judges** plays a truly vital role. It stands as the collective conscience of the global judiciary — uniting judges from every region in a shared commitment to independence,

integrity, and the rule of law. Through dialogue, cooperation, and the exchange of best practices, the Association strengthens mutual understanding among legal systems.

We are confident that today's conference, organized under the auspices of the Association, will significantly contribute to enhancing the effectiveness and independence of the judiciary. It will also help judges strengthen their awareness of the challenges posed by new realities.

We wish you every success in this important endeavor.

Thank you