CSCJA /ACJCS

International Judicial Relations Committee

Re: Report to the Annual Meeting – June 2025

The CSCJA is a member of two international associations, the International Association of Judges (IAJ) and the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association (CMJA). These memberships enable the Canadian judiciary to both contribute and learn about the issues affecting independence, rule of law and the administration of justice globally. There are invaluable opportunities to volunteer and exchange with impactful outcomes. Our committee wishes to use the platform of this AGM report to raise awareness of the work and opportunities within these organizations and encourage other members to get involved.

The IAJ / https://www.iaj-uim.org/iuw/

The IAJ regroups national associations of judges coming from more than 90 countries in the world. The IAJ has divided the countries into 4 regional groups. Canada is a part of the ANAO group (Asia, North America and Oceania). The IAJ holds an annual meeting in Autumn in a different country every year. The ANAO also holds a meeting in May and this year, our Association was the proud host of this meeting in Toronto.

This was a unique opportunity to explain the structure, challenges and initiatives of the Canadian federally appointed judiciary and to learn from other countries on similar matters. Judge representatives from the US, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Taiwan, Italy, Australia and New Zealand participated along with 7 representatives of the CSCJA. The group heard from Associate Chief Justice for Ontario Superior Court, The Honourable Faye McWatt Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs, Marc Giroux and from Senator Pierre Moreau Sponsor of bill S-291 - An Act to Establish Judicial Independence Day. Following those remarks, there was an expert presentation on the impact of social media in maintaining and enhancing respect for judicial officers. Finally, Europe, the US and Taiwan shared presentations on their respective initiatives to deal with delays in the court system and leverage ADR. Thorough summary notes are available to all CSCJA members from these presentations as an attachment to this report and on the Member News site of the CSCJA. I encourage you to review.

The annual meeting of the IAJ will take place in Baku, Azerbaijan from October 12-16, 2025. Our Association holds six spots for delegates at the Conference. The Canadian Judicial Council (CJC) has granted funding for 4. Our delegates were chosen following a call for expression of interest and approved by the Board of directors and the CJC. Two others were selected for 2 of the 6 spots but will attempt to seek alternate funding.

The CMJA / https://www.cmja.org/history-and-aims-and-objectives/

The CMJA regroups associations and individual members coming from countries of the Commonwealth. It also holds an annual conference in a different country every year with a theme that is both relevant to the members of the Commonwealth but especially relevant to the host country. The 2025 conference will be held in Banjul, Gambia on September 21st to the 26th, 2025. The theme is *Innovations In Judicial Practice: Embracing Change For A Better Future*. https://www.cmja.org/conferences/

The CJC adopted a resolution approving the financing of three judges to this Conference and a call for interest amongst CMJA members within the CSCJA was conducted in January. This year marks the final year of the 3-year Presidential term for our colleague Justice Lynne Leitch of Ontario.

Last year, the CMJA conference took place in in Kigali, Rwanda, Sept. 8th-12th 2024. A report of the conference has been prepared by Justice Graham Mew to share the educational content with CSCJA members. The full report is attached here and is also available on the CSCJA Member News site.

DENIS JACQUES, S.C.J.
Chair of the International Judicial relations Committee
Members of the Committee: Justices Clayton Conlan, Julie Dutil, Thomas Cyr, Lynne Leitch, William Goodridge

2025 Regional Meeting of the

Asian, North American and Oceanian (ANAO) Regional Group of the International Association of Judges

Thursday, May 15, 2025

Royal Canadian Yacht Club, Toronto, Canada

9:00 Eastern time

Clayton Conlan convened the meeting and recognized three attendees in particular:

- Giacomo Oberto, IAJ Secretary General
- Allyson Duncan, ANAO President
- Robert Blair, ANAO Past President

The following persons were present:

- Australia (AJOA)
  - Daniel O'Connor
- Canada ((CSCJA)
  - Clayton Conlan
  - Denis Jacques
  - Robert Blair
  - William Goodridge
  - Erica Chozik
  - Lukasz Granosik
  - Michele Monast
- Kazakhstan
  - Amir Doszhan
    - Nariman Beknazarov (interpreter)
- Mongolia (MJA)
  - Tsogt Tsend
- New Zealand
  - William Hastings
- Taiwan
  - Grace Yin-Lun Lin
- The United States (Federal Judges Association)
  - Daniel O'Connor
  - Michelle Childs
  - Karen Schreier
  - Allyson Duncan

The following persons participated virtually:

- Cynthia Rufe, Federal Judges Association

- Leo Gordon, Federal Judges Association

Regrets:

- Judge Margaret McKeown, FJA
- Justice Chrissa Loukas-Karlssen (AJ)A)

SPECIAL GUESTS

- Associate Chief Justice for the Ontario Superior Court Faye McWatt
- Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs Marc Giroux
- Senator Pierre Moreau, who introduced S-291 – An Act to Establish Judicial Independence Day

Acknowledgements were recognized and accepted

Justice Conlan introduced the first three speakers:

Associate Chief Justice Faye McWatt

Chief Justice McWatt delivered welcome remarks, focusing on maintaining and enhancing respect for judicial officers and addressing court system backlogs and delays. She emphasized that public respect for judicial officers and courts is vital for constructive engagement with the legal system. Troublingly, she noted the rise of misinformation campaigns designed to undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions, making courts and judicial officers vulnerable. While constructive criticism and judicial accountability are important, a lack of public trust risks disagreement becoming more disparaging. The Ontario Superior Court of Justice has undertaken several initiatives to enhance respect:

- Approved a multiyear strategic plan to increase transparency and accountability, which is anticipated to build public trust.
- Established a Community Engagement Advisory Group to develop opportunities for judges to engage communities and provide education on topics like judicial independence and the rule of law.
- Created a Media Relations Committee to ensure accurate public information about the justice system and decisions, facilitating better reporting by the media. Addressing backlogs and delays is critical, as "justice delayed is, as we know, justice denied". The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing challenges. Ontario's Justice Accelerated strategy aims for a more accessible and resilient justice system. Initiatives include:
- Investing in a digital case management system for full end-to-end digitization, replacing disconnected technologies with an integrated platform for case initiation, management, document handling, and virtual hearings. This signifies the end of a paper-based justice system in Ontario.
- Holding "civil blitzes," which are multi-week virtual trial sittings where judges from across the province focus on resolving the oldest cases in a specific region.

- Conducting a comprehensive review of the Rules of Civil Procedure, which have become difficult to navigate over 40 years. A consultation report proposes a new civil litigation process based on core ideas such as fixed trial dates (shifting the process from party-driven to court-driven), preventing adjournments except in exceptional circumstances, and implementing greater judicial case management to ensure continuity and accountability.

Marc Giroux, Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs in Canada

Marc provided an overview of his role, which he described as potentially unique. His position was established by the Judges Act in 1978, and he serves as a delegate of the Minister of Justice in administering the Act while remaining independent from the Justice Department. His office acts as an intermediary between the judiciary and the government. Key responsibilities include managing a significant budget and being responsible for the payment of salaries to the approx. 1200 federally appointed judges in Canada. He also administers judges' allowances (travel, conference, incidental), publishing guidelines and aggregate expenses publicly. Mr. Giroux's office oversees the appointment process for federally appointed judges, working with an independent committee that reviews candidates and provides a shortlist of recommendations to the Minister of Justice. While the Minister makes the recommendation to the government for appointment, their discretion is limited to candidates on the independent committee's shortlist. He also serves as the Executive Director and Senior General Counsel at the Canadian Judicial Council (CJC). The CJC, distinct from his office and the National Judicial Institute (NJI) which handles education, is involved in projects like a study on the health and well-being of judges, acknowledging increasing workload pressures and decreasing resources. Mr. Giroux highlighted the benefits of international exchanges between judges for maintaining a healthy, strong, and independent judiciary, which is crucial for a healthy democracy.

Senator Pierre Moreau

Pierre Moreau, a Senator of Canada appointed in September, introduced Bill S-291, an Act to Establish Judicial Independence Day in Canada, as his first legislative act. The bill, which will be reintroduced in the Senate on May 28th, has three main purposes:

1. To express support for the International Association of Judges initiative asking the United Nations to declare January 11th International Day of Judicial Independence, commemorating the Thousand Robes March by Polish judges in 2020. It serves as a gesture of remembrance and solidarity with efforts to protect judicial independence and the rule of law.

2. To highlight the threats to the independence of the judiciary in many countries worldwide, including (unfortunately) Canada's neighbors to the South. He noted that the separation of powers is essential for safeguarding the rule of law, but the executive is increasingly attacking judicial independence with partisan intent, citing examples from various countries where judges have faced targeting, dismissal, threats, or death. Drawing on his own experience as a former lawyer and legislator, he stated that while

he sometimes disagreed with judicial decisions, he always respected them and refrained from public criticism, recommending appeal when necessary.

3. To proclaim the importance of the judiciary as a foundation of the rule of law, emphasizing that even stable democracies like Canada are not immune to threats. He cited instances of Canadian politicians criticizing courts and judges, claiming judicial activism or challenging appointment processes, which erodes public confidence and undermines the authority of the courts. Senator Moreau argued that when the judiciary is under frontal attack, only the public can serve as a bulwark in safeguarding judicial independence. The bill's preamble emphasizes the rule of law's fundamental nature, its dependence on an impartial judiciary, and the importance of merit-based appointments and fair disciplinary processes. Senator Moreau believes the bill will affirm Canada's commitment to the rule of law and enable judicial institutions to promote public information and awareness, suggesting judges engage with schools. He commended the Supreme Court of Canada's efforts to make decisions accessible through "summaries". He noted recent attacks from politicians in Ontario and Quebec, which he worries could become a dangerous populist trend that weakens the judicial system. The appointment process in Canada involves an independent committee recommending candidates based on merit from which the Minister of Justice makes a selection. He hopes the bill will be adopted around 2026 and intends to ensure its progress through the Senate. When adopted, it will provide Chief Justices with a platform to emphasize the importance of judicial independence recognized by all branches of government.

Justice Conlan thanked the special guests and introduced the first module:

I. Maintaining and Enhancing Respect for Judicial Officers and the Impact of Social Media

Justice Granosik introduced Professor Michael Geist of Ottawa University and guided him through a discussion on this subject of aspects of the social media of which judges should be aware. Professor Geist is the Canada Research Chair in Internet and E Commerce Law, and teaches at law schools around the world. He focused on the intersection of law and technology.

He provided a landscape of social media tools, noting its rapid evolution and surprising scale and Geist emphasized that ownership significantly impacts social media platforms. He compared social media owners to "press barons" who prioritize influence over commercial concerns.

Regarding social media influence, Professor Geist noted that subscriber numbers can be deceiving; platforms prioritize "engagement" (likes, comments, retweets). Algorithms feed users content based on their past engagement, making subscriber counts less relevant for determining what users see.

A significant issue highlighted was the use of "bots" – automated, non-real users designed to look real and generate content, particularly prevalent on Twitter (X). Bots are used to create the false impression of widespread interest or opposition to a topic. This can be weaponized, such as by state-sponsored bot farms, to influence public discourse and make certain viewpoints appear more popular than they are. Buying bot accounts is relatively cheap and easy. He

cautioned that when a court or judge posts something and receives many responses, it might be manufactured interest rather than real public outrage.

Professor Geist discussed the evolution of guidelines for judges using social media. In Canada, the Canadian Judicial Council (CJC) has released guidelines, becoming more specific over time. These guidelines build on general principles of judicial conduct. He noted that judges, like law students seeking employment, might need to "scrub" their social media history, although content removal isn't always possible. He stressed that judges should never express opinions publicly or privately on social media. He particularly warned against the assumption that private groups (on platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Signal) are truly private, as accounts can be compromised or accessed indirectly, making anything said potentially public. The general rule should be not to say anything on social media that one would not be comfortable with being made public.

He addressed the relationship between social media and loss of public trust. While social media can be a tool for courts to increase public awareness and understanding, it can also be "weaponized" to spread misinformation and attack institutions, including the judiciary. Public information sources are changing, with fewer people relying on traditional media for news, especially younger generations. Courts need to be present on platforms where the public gets information. However, direct engagement with the public on substantive matters is risky. He advised "never feed the trolls" – don't engage with users posting inflammatory comments designed to provoke a reaction, as this only amplifies their reach. Posting official information ("broadcasting") is low risk, but direct conversation is high risk and often counterproductive.

Regarding tensions between the executive and the judiciary and social media attacks from politicians, Professor Geist noted this is not a "fair fight" because politicians' goals (like seeking votes) differ fundamentally from judges' roles. Politicians may criticize decisions to appeal to certain voters, often without considering the harm this causes to the judiciary's reputation. These attacks can embolden the public and erode trust. When a line is crossed, it typically falls to the Chief Justice, speaking on behalf of the court, to respond. This is becoming more necessary in the social media era, though navigating this response is difficult to avoid harming public perception further. Chief Justices in Canada and the US have begun to speak out in response to serious concerns.

Professor Geist's key takeaways included recognizing the real risks associated with social media for the judiciary. However, he stressed there are also real opportunities, especially for courts, to use platforms effectively to increase public access and understanding of their role and decisions. He noted that traditional methods of disseminating information are less effective today. He also briefly mentioned Artificial Intelligence (AI) as the "next stage" of challenges, particularly regarding how AI services access and use judicial decisions, citing an ongoing case in Canada.

When asked how to respond when social media attacks cross a line, particularly if thousands of participants are involved, he suggested first trying to determine if the response is real or manufactured (due to bots). If it is manufactured, ignoring it is often best. Even if the response is real, he reminded that the social media echo chamber is not representative of the entire public. While difficult, ignoring many attacks ("turning the other cheek") might be the most effective approach, as such online outrage often fades quickly. Removing content that violates

platform rules is an option, though less effective on platforms like X which have looser guidelines.

Following thanks to Professor Geist and a brief lunch break, the second module was introduced:

II. Strategies to Deal with Backlogs and Delays in the court system

Giacomo Oberto, Secretary-General of the International Association of Judges and Chair of the CEPEJ-SATURN Working Group on Judicial Time Management of the Council of Europe, presented on the **European experience**. His presentation detailed the work of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), established by the Council of Europe. The CEPEJ's purpose includes analyzing judicial systems, optimizing judicial time management, promoting the quality of justice, facilitating the implementation of European standards, and supporting reforms. The CEPEJ works towards relieving the caseload of the European Court of Human Rights by preventing violations of the right to a fair trial within a reasonable time, as enshrined in Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

A key focus of his presentation is the CEPEJ's Backlog Reduction Tool. The tool outlines a step-by-step methodology, starting with designating a lead institution responsible for overseeing the process.

1. Analysis of the existing situation:

2. Measures to be adopted: Developing strategies and measures to tackle backlogs, including setting realistic targets and timeframes, exchange of best practices, training on case management, allocation of resources, measurement of workload (like case weighting), and specialisation in the judiciary.

The presentation also covered the full digitalization of civil cases through e-filing and virtual hearings, the potential of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) to assist judges with preparatory work, case management, and data analysis, and reducing the size of submissions and judgments. Improving the management of court-appointed experts, including their selection and compliance with timeframes, transferring non-judicial tasks from judges to other professionals, rationalizing the court network, promoting the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) like arbitration, mediation, and conciliation, transferring competence for certain cases from panels to single judges and temporary reorganization of courts to deal with backlog.

3. Monitoring: Track progress, identify shortcomings, and make necessary adjustments. (Responsibility of the lead institution)

Allyson Duncan presented on the **Role of ADR from the US perspective**. She explained the history of judicial opposition to arbitration, leading Congress to pass the Federal Arbitration Act in the 1920s to recognize arbitration's standing as a private contract and requiring federal district courts to adopt some form of ADR in 1998.

ADR is seen as a way of reducing cases and moving things along more cost-effectively, partly by curtailing discovery practice, which is a significant cost driver in US civil litigation. The Civil

Justice Reform Act of 1990 mandated that federal district courts authorize ADR processes in all civil cases. This requires courts to adopt a program using a neutral party to assist in resolving issues. Examples of ADR in district courts include mediation, arbitration, negotiation, settlement discussions (sometimes with a judge or magistrate), and mini-trials. Mandatory mediation has also been adopted by federal circuit courts and state courts, such as North Carolina. New York adopted "presumptive mandatory mediation" in 2019 for certain cases, where mediation is automatically required unless parties opt out with a valid reason.

She noted a lack of extensive empirical data on how much ADR has facilitated the process or diverted cases. However, she cited an older study on civil cases involving the government, where 65% settled when ADR was used, versus only 29% when it was not. An unintended consequence she observed is that mandatory ADR in federal district courts appears to have exacerbated the incidence of the vanishing civil trial.

The discussion also touched on courts encouraging ADR even without mandatory rules. and the Canadian experience where ADR didn't increase the *rate* of settlement but was highly appreciated by parties and lawyers and helped prevent cases from lingering in the system, especially when applied early. In the US and Canada, while court-paid ADR options exist, private mediation is also available but is paid for by the parties.

Grace Yin-Lun Lin presented on the role of ADR, specifically focusing on practices in Taiwan. She discussed the traditional court mediation procedure in Taiwan, where parties can directly apply for mediation handled by a judge or judicial associate officer. If mediation is successful, a transcript is made, reviewed, and sealed, and two-thirds of the litigation fee is refunded to encourage mediation. If unsuccessful, parties can initiate a regular court action. Pretrial mediation required by law follows a similar procedure, and if unsuccessful, the case is sent for judgment. For non-mandatory cases, courts have varying practices; some assign cases directly, while others exclude cases deemed infeasible or unnecessary for pretrial mediation (e.g., certain actions like defamation or cases where parties are unwilling). If parties agree to mediate after consultation, they proceed; if unsuccessful, the case goes to judgment. Courts can also seek settlement or refer cases to mediation at any time with the parties' consent. Judges can handle mediation or designate mediators, and some courts have judges dedicated to mediation cases. A safety risk assessment checklist is provided in family matters mediation.

A new approach in Taiwan is the Division of Pretrial Mediation for new cases at the Taiwan High Court, established in August 2023 to handle new appellate cases. This division acts as a "watergate", processing almost all new appellate cases before they are assigned to individual judges. The presiding judge and law clerks examine formality and ask parties if they consent to mediation. If consent is given, mediators are arranged; if not, the division may order correction or ask parties to exchange pleadings to formulate undisputed facts and issues. After this formulation procedure, the division may identify new possibilities for mediation and ask again. The time frame for this division is four months, extendable by two. Grace believes that even if mediation doesn't happen or is unsuccessful, the formulation procedure benefits the assigned judge and might still lead to settlement or mediation later. She showed data indicating a significant rise in cases settled through mediation referred by an ADR program from 2022 on. The Supreme Court in Taiwan also set up a mediation procedure in 2021.

Grace concluded by sharing a typical slogan used in Taiwan to promote ADR: "To save money, time and effort.". This slogan reflects the challenge of backlogs and high caseloads. She explained that a trial can take years with an uncertain outcome, whereas mediation allows parties to find a balance and reach a decision themselves, suggesting that getting 50% or 60% is better than nothing.

The Chair thanked attendees, both online and in person, and the Canadian Superior Courts Judges Association for hosting. The program continues the following day with community-based events, including a tour and a visit to the Court of Appeal for Ontario.

SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE

Court House
5 Court Street
Kingston, Ontario K7L 2N4
Tel: (613) 548-6815 Fax: (613) 548-6209

MEMORANDUM

To: **Justice Clayton Conlan**

cc: **Justice Lynne Leitch**

From: **Justice Graeme Mew**

Date: **11 November 2024**

Re: **Conference of the Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association ("CMJA"), Kigali, Rwanda. 8-12 September 2024**

I had the privilege of attending the CMJA Conference in Rwanda last month. Over 300 delegates attended, including an impressive 11 delegates from Canada of whom six were federally appointed judges (Justice Malcolm Rowe from the Supreme Court of Canada, Justice Sandra Wilkinson from the British Columbia Supreme Court, Justice Dallas Miller from the Alberta Court of King's Bench, and Justices Lynne Leitch, Todd Ducharme and myself from the Ontario Superior Court).

Educational

The theme of the conference was "Environmental Justice".

The opening ceremony was attended by the President of the Republic of Rwanda, His Excellency Paul Kagame.

The keynote speech was given by Chief Justice Faustin Ntezilyayo of Rwanda. He proposed that the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a basic human right. Environmental justice can be secured if a balanced distribution of environmental benefits and burdens is ensured, just procedures characterised by enjoyment of the right to access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making and access to courts for remedy and redress are guaranteed, and just recognition and respect of all ("recognition

justice") is promoted. While courts can provide environmental justice through the application of public and private law remedies – such cases might include environmental management and protection, forestry, mining, coastal and marine resources, spatial planning, water and energy resources, industrial activities, conservation of air, land and other natural resources - special environmental courts or tribunals would be better positioned to deliver environmental justice.

As an aside, Chief Justice Ntezilyayo spent a number of years in Canada during the period of political upheaval in Rwanda that resulted in the genocide of 1994. He taught at Carleton University and he has children still living in Ottawa.

As is so often the case at these conferences, it was necessary to choose between equally interesting concurrent sessions. Two such competing sessions were on "Private Remedies in Trans-Border Pollution", and "Public and Private Rights to a Better Environment". At the second of these two sessions, Justice Malcolm Rowe presented a paper on "The Role of the Courts in Environmental Protection: A Canadian Perspective".

At the end of the first day of the conference, delegates were taken to the Kigali Genocide Museum, where the remains of over 250,000 victims of the genocide against the Tutsi people of Rwanda are interred. The museum's stated goals are:

a. Commemoration – To provide a dignified place of burial for victims of the Genocide against the Tutsi
b. Education - To inform and educate visitors about the causes, implementation and consequences of the genocide, and other genocides throughout history.
c. Prevention - To teach visitors about what we can do to prevent future genocides.
d. Documentation - To provide a documentation centre to record evidence of the genocide, testimonies of genocide survivors and details of genocide victims.
e. Survivor Support - To provide support for survivors, in particular orphans and widows.

The visit to the Genocide Museum was very moving. The terror of that time was still palpable from the exhibits.

It was fitting that at the opening plenary on the second day of the conference, presentations were given on "Restorative Justice After Conflict" by Lord Justice Bernard McCloskey of Northern Ireland and Justice Geraldine Umugwaneza of Rwanda. Justice Umugwaneza's passionate presentation was particularly memorable. She described the "gacaca" (meaning "grass") courts which dealt with all but the most serious criminal prosecutions arising from the genocide. Between 2005 and 2012, an astonishing 1.9 million cases were heard by gacaca courts (to put this into perspective, the population of Rwanda at the time of the genocide (1994) was around 8 million people). The gacaca courts were based on precolonial traditional courts, used to resolve conflicts between families. The courts were held outside, and the heads of households served as judges. These courts handled not only genocide suspects accused of minor crimes, such as arson, but also some homicide cases considered "less serious".

There were concurrent sessions on a variety of other topics, not all of which were directly related to the theme of environmental justice:

- ADR reciprocal enforcement with the New York and Singapore Conventions
- Case management: Reducing backlogs through problem-solving courts, plea bargaining and using part time judiciary
- Military justice
- Fighting corruption in the Judiciary
- Judicial Conduct
- Regulation of Sport
- Demonstrating IT systems in Paperless Courts
- Cross-Border Disputes in Private Family Law
- Empowering Prisoners in Their Own Rights

Canadian delegates participated in a number of the conference sessions. Justice Lynne Leitch, in her capacity as President of the CMJA spoke at the Opening and Closing Ceremonies and the Gala Dinner. She also provided delegates with an Update on the UNODC Global Judicial Integrity Network (see below) and chaired a "Fireside Chat", presented by the Gender Committee, between Justice Jackeline Kamau of the High Court of Kenya and Chief Justice Mabel Agyemang of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

In addition to Justice Rowe's presentation, I presented a paper on Sport Regulation and Justice Miller chaired a session on the creation of an association for employment/industrial judges.

The delivery of the programme was excellent and there were many opportunities to exchange views and experiences and to learn from each other. The Kigali Convention Centre was a first class venue. Our hosts provided the warmest of welcomes in their impressive and beautiful country.

Global Justice Integrity Network and the Nauru Declaration on Judicial Wellness

Justice Lynne Leitch, a member of the Advisory Board of the Global Justice Integrity Network - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, provided an update on the work of the Network and its resources (www.unodc.org/ji). Her report included the announcement that the Network launched a pilot phase of a new mentorship programme for women judges.

She also highlighted that pursuant to an initiative supported by the UNODC a Declaration on Judicial Wellness had been created which was adopted at a Regional Judicial Conference on Integrity and Judicial Well-Being, at which the CMJA was represented by Justice Leitch and District Judge Shamim Qureshi of England & Wales. The drafting committee of 18 members represented a wide spectrum of justices from the Pacific region and Australia, and further afield including England and Wales, Ukraine, Canada, Portugal, the Caribbean, Jamaica, Singapore, and Nigeria.

The headline messages contained in the Nauru Declaration state that:

- Judicial Well-being is essential and must be recognised and supported. It warrants attention and investment commensurate with other institutional

priorities, such as access to justice, the upholding of judicial values, judicial training and judicial efficiency.

- Judicial stress is not a weakness and must not be stigmatised. Judicial leaders have a particular role in promoting healthy cultural messages about judicial stress and well-being.
- Judicial well-being is a shared responsibility, requiring action on the part of both individual judges and the judicial institutions.
- Judicial well-being is supported by an ethical and inclusive judicial culture. Collegial connection is a key predictor of judicial well-being.
- Promoting judicial well-being requires a combination of awareness-raising, prevention, and management activities. This approach should raise awareness of judicial well-being and judicial stress, prevent avoidable sources of judicial stress, and help manage the inherent demands of judicial work.
- Judicial well-being initiatives must suit the unique circumstances and requirements of national jurisdictions.
- Judicial well-being is enhanced by human rights: judges are entitled to fundamental rights of freedom of expression, belief, association, and assembly, subject to their duty to preserve the dignity of their judicial office and uphold the impartiality, integrity and independence of the judiciary.

Other plenary sessions dealt with "Admissibility of Computer-Generated Evidence".

Social

A highlight of the conference was a Gala dinner held at the Convention Centre.

On the day after the conference there was an optional excursion to the Kings' Palace Museum and Rwesero Museum in Nyanza.

Membership

The CMJA is substantially dependent on the income it receives from its individual and institutional members. The annual subscription for individual members is just £65 ($117 at the current exchange rate). There are currently 61 Canadian members of the CMJA, of which 35 are federally appointed judges from across the country. I hope the CSCJA will encourage many more of our Canadian judges to take out an individual membership (this can be done online at https://www.cmja.org/individuals/)

Council Meeting

Justice Leitch and I attended the CMJA Council meeting and subsequent lunch with Chief Justices.

Triennial Conference 2025

The next conference, which will be a triennial conference at which elections will be held for Officers and Council Members, will be held in Banjul, Gambia, from 21-26 September 2025.

Thank you, once again, for the support that you and the CSCJA have given to Lynne, myself and the CMJA in general. At the sake of repeating what I have said before, I cannot emphasise too strongly how important that support is, and how greatly appreciated it is by the Commonwealth judicial family, which looks to Canada as a leader in judicial independence, judicial education and judicial standards.

Graeme Mew J.

CMJA President Justice Lynne Leitch signing the Visitors' Book at the Rwesero Museum

Chief Justice Faustin Ntezilyayo of Rwanda and CMJA President Justice Lynne Leitch at the Opening Ceremony