

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 18th IAWJ AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE, 2024 ON THE THEME: “COMBATING NEGATIVE CULTURAL PRACTICES IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES: THE ROLE OF WOMEN JUDGES HELD AT LABADI BEACH HOTEL, ACCRA – GHANA ON 13TH TO 15TH MAY 2024

1.0 PREAMBLE

- [i] The 18th IAWJ Africa Regional Conference 2024 was held under the theme: ***Combating Negative Cultural Practices in Contemporary Times: The Role of Women Judges.***

The International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) was started nearly thirty years ago by a core group of 50 dynamic and visionary women judges from around the world. The founders began with a vision of increasing the number of women judges and promoting equal justice for women and girls throughout the world. Today the IAWJ has grown into a highly respected organization with over 6,500 judges in more than 100 countries and territories and continue to expand its membership.

2.0 CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

- [ii] The mission of IAWJ is centered on eradicating discrimination against women and girls in societies around the world. In this regard, the conference was held:

1. To build on the success(es) of previous Conference.
2. To bring together judicial officers from Africa specifically and around the world and
3. To discuss the theme and other matters of mutual concern.

3.0 PARTICIPATION

[iii] The following countries were represented:

- | | | |
|------------|----------|--------------|
| Benin | Botswana | Cote D'voire |
| The Gambia | Ghana | Kenya |
| Nigeria | Senegal | South Africa |
| Tanzania | USA | Uganda |
- United Kingdom.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

[iv] After exhaustive discussions, the conference ended with the following observations and recommendations as its resolutions:

- a) To go back to our respective home countries and make the required changes. Women have the responsibility to be the change we seek and break down these persistent barriers of negative cultural practices. That must be our joint priority.
- b) Member Countries must have a *Register of Sexual Offenders* which should be updated regularly to help monitor and share information among member countries to combat associated sexual offences.
- c) To educate and train the Marginalized and Vulnerable on the Legal Systems of member countries and access to Justice.
- d) To develop Training and Resource Manuals on Gender Responsive Adjudication in member Countries.
- e) Traditional Rulers must be engaged to bring about change by educating them on the need for them to avoid interfering in the Judicial Process especially when it involves sexual offences and crimes against children and women.

- f) Traditional Leaders are to be trained to empower Women and the Vulnerable in their communities since they are respected and considered as opinion leaders.
- g) Women Judges should arise and use our intellect to condemn obnoxious cultural practices, mentor young girls and groom our sons & young men to respect women.
- h) Member Countries are charged to document and extol female Judges who are breaking glass ceilings to encourage other women and to serve as mentors.
- i) To partner Civil Society Organizations/Institutions to ensure Mindset Change and ensure that stereotypes do not have a place in our Jurisprudence.
- j) Partner with local human rights organizations for public interest litigation to obtain positive jurisprudence.
- k) Monitor and analyze judicial reasoning. IAWJ Chapters should be vigilant in ensuring that stereotypes do not impede access to justice for victims/survivors of gender-based violence. This means scrutinizing judicial reasoning to ensure that it is in line with law & facts and not stereotypes.
- l) Highlight the harms of judicial stereotypes through evidence-based research to create awareness and highlight the prevalence, nature, and harms of stereotyping in decided cases.
- m) Advocate legal and policy reforms to empower women to be at the forefront of advocating for the rights of women and girls within the legal framework.
- n) Improve judicial capacity through training to address judicial stereotyping. Education and training may come in many forms including seminars and written resources (e.g. bench books).
- o) Partner with other actors such as FIDA or other relevant CSOs to appeal decisions involving stereotyping to higher courts; and to submit petitions or communications to regional and international

human rights bodies alleging human rights violations based on judicial stereotyping.

- p) Highlight good practices by IAWJ Chapters to give judges important perspectives that can help them move beyond stereotypes.
- q) Judges must avoid the use of gender discriminatory language. Judges must ensure that gender-based violence trials are conducted in a fashion that debunks stereotypes and challenge the stereotypical reasoning of other judges and actors in the legal system.
- r) IAWJ Chapters must ensure that legislation, norms, and practices within their countries conform to human rights and constitutional guarantees.
- s) Review traditional practices assigning certain chores to women and men.
- t) Review discriminatory tendencies at work which envisage women as incompetent in certain jobs for example engineering, military, Chief Executive Officers but good as secretaries, nurses, house helps, receptionists, teachers etc.
- u) Review duties which hinder the performance of women at work by designing and building infrastructure that meets the needs of female judicial officers which can lead to the attraction of more females to apply for judicial positions.
- v) Judges should be conscious of their own security and avoid being predictable.

5.0 CONCLUSION

[v] The 18th Annual IAWJ Africa Regional Conference in Accra Ghana was a resounding success and member Countries are encouraged to implement the recommendations here made. Together we can be the change that we seek.

6.0 SIGNATURES

Benin

Botswana

Cote D'voire

The Gambia

Ghana

Kenya

Nigeria

Senegal

South Africa

Tanzania

USA

Uganda

United Kingdom