INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF TRIAL LAWYERS

Rule of Law

Address by Paul Sreenan SC, President of the IATL to the Bar of Northern Ireland, 15 December 2022.

Chairperson, Colleagues and Guests

It is one of the highlights of my term as President of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers to visit with you here in Belfast.

The Academy has a long and close relationship with the Bar of Northern Ireland, of which I am proud to say I am a member. Not only does the Academy have many active Fellows here, including our former Dean, Michael Stitt, but over 15 years a total of 22 of your brightest and best young juniors, some of whom I see here today, have availed of our scholarship Ireland Program which has enriched both them and the Academy.

The Academy is a Fellowship of the most skilled trial lawyers in the world. Membership is by invitation only and in the United States its membership is limited to 500 Fellows below the age of 70.

Part of its mission is to defend and promote the Rule of Law and it is about that topic that I want to talk to you today.

The fact is that the Rule of Law is under threat.

It is under threat within countries and internationally between countries.

This is not just a foreign phenomenon nor is it a new one. It is happening here in the West, most visibly and dramatically in recent times in the United States but also, in the context of the Northern Ireland protocol for example, in the United Kingdom and in the context of the EU, in Hungary and Poland.

Historically, your Bar has been at the forefront in upholding the Rule of Law in Northern Ireland and it has done so successfully in very difficult times. Before I go further, I want to acknowledge that and pay tribute to you, and your colleagues that went before you, for their courage and leadership and admirable work in that regard.

But the sad fact is that, apart from lawyers, most people know little or nothing about the Rule of Law.

Most of us can identify the importance of the Rule of Law but that does not apply to the average man or woman in the street or perhaps I should say more pertinently, the average voter.

And amongst those who seek to undermine the Rule of Law, there is a great danger that they successfully portray the Rule of Law, as a tool of a self-interested elite to dominate or oppress their fellow citizens or undermine the sovereignty of the nation.

Our challenge is to advocate and to educate. We need to get the message across to people worldwide that the Rule of Law matters and it is what serves to protect them from arbitrary government.

So what is the rule of law? If any of us was asked, say at a dinner party, to explain what is the rule of law, would we be able to give an adequate and clear response? Even as experienced judges and trial lawyers, I am not sure that we would. We all know that it is important. We all know that it is important to democracy. But we might, to be honest, struggle to explain adequately what it means.

Many have attempted a definition of Rule of Law. None I would suggest is satisfactory. Many are not definitions but descriptions. Further, the attempt to define what is an organic and changing concept has the disadvantage of ultimately limiting its development.

To further complicate things there is no universally accepted concept of the rule of law. Historically, many non-democratic authoritarian regimes argued vehemently that they observe the rule of law because they promulgate clear rules - although in truth, the law and the judiciary were merely weapons that they used to enforce their will and suppress human rights.

The most expansive concept of the rule of law is to be found amongst democratic countries but again, it is doubtful if democracy is an indispensable requirement of the rule of law.

Like many difficult concepts in life, it can be easier to describe something not by what it is, but by what it is not. It can be easier to describe its absence than to describe its presence. Such is the case with the rule of law. This is a point made by the late Sir Thomas Bingham, one of England's most respected judges, in a book that he wrote on the rule of law.

He said:-

> *"The hallmark of a regime which flouts the rule of law are, alas, all too familiar: the midnight knock on the door, the sudden disappearance, the show trial, the subjection of prisoners to genetic experiment, the confession extracted by torture, the gulag and the concentration camp, the gas chamber, the practice of genocide or ethnic cleansing, the waging of aggressive war."*

This list was not meant to be conclusive but we get the meaning. There are many countries today which alas, fall into that category. Iran and Myanmar immediately spring to mind.

The concept of the rule of law goes back at least to the time of Aristotle and involves a set of interdependent principles. It is an evolving concept that allows for description but I would suggest evades definition.

Perhaps the foundational principle of the rule of law is that the **law is king**. As the title to the principle suggests, we are ruled by law, not by the whim of somebody in control of the machinery of government. The primary benefit of this foundational principle is, of course, certainty and the freedom that comes with that certainty. We know the rules by which we are required to live (or at least they are publicly available and can be ascertained). They are not made up by the ruler or the government as they go, to deal with the circumstances of any particular individual or particular event. But the Rule of Law is much more than that.

Linked to this principle, is the principle that laws should be publicly available.

Equally important is that laws should not apply retrospectively. In other words, something should not be treated as being contrary to the law which was not contrary to the law at the time when it was done (or omitted to be done).

These principles may seem to us to be simple and self-evident but they were not always so and they are not currently so in many parts of the world. Again, I return to the point – imagine living in a world or in a country that did not observe such rules. Would you want to?

Another aspect of the rule of law that we must highlight is the importance of an **independent and impartial judiciary**. This is critical to ensuring equality before the law, a fair trial and the proper accountability of government and other state actors. These principles of fair trial, equality before the law and the ability to hold the state and government officials to account, are themselves all a fundamental part of the rule of law and dependent on an independent and impartial judiciary.

Allied to this I should mention the extent to which **corruption** exists in any society since this undermines and corrodes the rule of law. Since at least Magna Carta in 1215, corruption has been recognised as a serious threat to the rule of law.

Just as important as an independent judiciary is an **independent legal profession** free from intimidation by government or the courts. This is recognised internationally in, *inter alia*, the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, yet it is frequently attacked and undermined. For example, the current situation of the intimidation of lawyers in Singapore - a country in which approximately 60 people remain on death row - lawyers who attempted to represent some of those death row inmates, is a matter of very serious concern.

I have mentioned that the rule of law is a developing concept. One of the most important developments in recent decades is the widespread acceptance that the rule of law demands not just procedural safeguards but substantive rights and in particular, requires the recognition and protection of fundamental **human rights**. Thankfully, what are fundamental human rights should no longer be the subject of debate. They are widely recognised and enshrined in international conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) and a number of other regional conventions to similar effect.

But the Rule of Law is not just something that operates vertically, between the state and the citizen. It also operates horizontally between **states**.

It is of critical importance to humanity that the rule of law is observed internationally in relations between states and that an effective system of international courts and sanctions for breach is developed. A country that, as I speak, has clearly repudiated the rule of law in this respect is the Russian Federation. Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations requires member states to *"refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other matter inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."* And yet, the Russian Federation remains a permanent member of the Security Council.

What we see happening in Ukraine may be the most obvious and current manifestation of the importance of this issue but it has been an ongoing problem in our own time and one would be forgiven for thinking that the resultant threat is increasing, not diminishing.

Unfortunately, on this occasion the West does not have the standing to protest from the moral high ground that one would wish.

Just as at the domestic level, all must observe the law and the law should be applied equally, the same should apply on the international stage. Observance of the rule of law internationally is undermined if some countries, particularly powerful ones, do not obey it. That only serves to promote the belief that states may act unlawfully if they perceive their self-interest is at stake.

In this regard it is at least encouraging that in such matters as, the invasion of Iraq by the US and UK and the torture of prisoners in Guantanamo and elsewhere, it is ordinary citizens and lawyers who vocally protested and sought to have the rule of law observed. We see the same thing today within the Russian Federation and Iran where ordinary citizens are speaking out and protesting at what is clearly an unlawful war being waged against the citizens and the territory of Ukraine.

What is also encouraging is that amongst nations, the Netherlands remains a beacon of hope in the world in the area of international enforcement of the Rule of Law. As you know, less than a month ago, a Dutch court convicted three Russians and one Ukrainian of murder for the shooting down of MH17 on a flight from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur killing 298 people. The Netherlands led the investigation into that crash and quickly established the involvement of Russia in the shooting down of the aircraft. I am proud to say that one of our Dutch Fellows, Antoinette Collignon, was and remains actively involved in that litigation.

As we speak, there are also many **ongoing challenges** to the Rule of Law within states and those in Poland and Hungary, on our own doorstep, are particularly worrying. These are two countries that are examples of the law itself being used by autocratic regimes to undermine the Rule of Law. Through constitutional change and breach of separation of powers in each country, the ruling party has successfully undermined core concepts of the Rule of Law and particularly the independence of the judiciary. A notable example of what can result when courts are taken captive by the Executive is the decision in October 2021 by the Polish Constitutional Court declaring some provisions of the EU Treaty unconstitutional.[1] That was of course a decision that blatantly violated fundamental principles of EU law.

[1] Trybunal Konstytucyjny, K 3/21

You may have heard of the World Justice Program. The World Justice Program publishes annually a ranking of countries in terms of their observance of the rule of law. Hungary currently ranks 73 of 140 and is the worst ranking member of the EU. Poland comes in at No. 36.

Although in the case of both countries the EU itself has proved dilatory, weak, and ineffective in dealing with what in truth is a cancer capable of spreading rapidly if not checked, it has not been supine or inactive and it does offer hope for mechanisms, that over time, serve to bring delinquent governments back into line.

For example, Hungary and Poland are currently subject to Rule of Law proceedings under Article 7 TEU.

The EU now has a legislative basis in Regulation 2020/2092, that allows it to cut funds awarded to Member States in cases of established violations of the Rule of Law by those States if that violation endangers the EU budget. Both Hungary and Poland unsuccessfully contested that Regulation[2] before the EU Court of Justice. On 16 February of this year, the Court delivered a ruling that fully upheld the contested measure. The infringement by Poland and Hungary of the Rule of Law has already been established in recent cases[3].

The European Court of Human Rights also held in February of this year[4] that the Polish Supreme Court did not meet the requirements of Article 6 (Right to a Fair Trial). Later that month[5] the Court of Human Rights asked Poland in an interim measure not to take any decision in respect of the immunity of a Judge pending the determination by it of complaints pending before it in a case of Wrobel v Poland[6].

The establishment and survival of the European Union has been one of the most important steps worldwide in recent decades in institutionalizing the Rule of Law. The European Union has adopted the Rule of Law as a fundamental attribute of its identity. The extent to which it will deal with the challenges posed by developments in Poland and Hungary will be one of its defining moments and I am sorry to say that recent news of a political compromise is not encouraging in that regard.

Of course, we should not be surprised by what has happened in either Hungary or Poland. There are plenty of precedents. One that I would like to focus on for a moment, because it is particularly stark, is that of Venezuela.

We see here the same features that repeat themselves time and time again. The democratic system itself facilitates and enables the autocrat to come to power. He then systematically undermines or dismantles the institutions of democracy, the principle of the Rule of Law, an Independent Judiciary, the capacity for any meaningful elections thereafter and any viable political opposition. Hugo Chavez was elected President of Venezuela in 1998 having attempted two failed coups d'état in February and November of 1992. He died in March 2013 only to be replaced by an equally autocratic chosen successor Nicolos Maduro.

[2] Hungary v Parliament and Council C-156/21 and Poland v Parliament and Council C-157/21
[3] See in particular Case C-824/18 A.B. & Ors; C-791/19, Commission v Poland; Case C-564/19 IS
[4] ECtHR Application No. 1469/20, Case of Advance Pharma s.p.Z 0.0 v Poland
[5] 8 February 2022
[6] Application No. 6904/22

The details of how democracy was dismantled, and the Rule of Law subverted are well documented. The consequences in terms of the impoverishment of the people of Venezuela are there to be seen. However, the fact is that, as is so often the case, none of this could have been achieved without the active participation of the judiciary – a judiciary that lacked independence and was cowed or bullied into subservience.

This point is well made by Pesci Feltri, a Venezuelan Professor of Law in a paper in the Italian Journal of Public Law[7]. Having stated that without judicial independence it is impossible to warrant the Rule of Law, democracy or the defense of human rights, he said:-

> *"The judges that lack independence are "the judges designated for their political or personal link with those who designate them" (designated by "hand-picked"), or who may only remain or be promoted in their offices by virtue of their personal relations"[8] It is precisely the absence of judicial independence (that) allowed the rooting of a totalitarian and failed State in Venezuela resulting therefrom in the most serious consequences for Venezuelans. When a politicized judge who does not comply with his essential functions which is to control the power, there is a free road for the (installation) of a totalitarian regime. The Supreme Tribunal of Justice, but especially its constitutional chamber, has created the condition for the takeover of the absolute power by the Executive. Although (the) Venezuelan judicial system has never been an example to be followed both before and after Chavism, what has happened during these two decades has no precedent. The road toward the politicization of the Judicial Power in Venezuela started in August 1999. When the National Constituant Assembly before the elaboration and promotion of the Constitution, created the Commission of Judicial Restructuring and declared the judicial emergency, proceeding to remove some judges and appoint other (hand-picked) in a moment of total instability. Due to the Judge's Provisory Condition in the year 2003, the Inter-American Human Rights Court published a report expressing its concern for aspects "effecting the independence and impartiality of the Judicial Power…".*

I want to turn now, and not just in the Venezuelan context, to the risks that are posed to the Rule of Law by ill informed, careless or even worse, malevolent, criticism of the judiciary by those holding positions of authority and respect in society. The issue of criticism of the judiciary by members of the legislature or executive gives rise to peculiar problems. I will give you three instances of this by way of example. The first in terms of time is (again) from Venezuela.

Many of you are familiar with the case of Judge Maria Afiuni. The story demonstrates graphically what happens to the Rule of Law and to judicial independence when political leaders, who should know better, do not respect the separation of powers.

In that case, in 2009, Judge Afiuni released from detention a businessman who had been held in detention awaiting trial for three years when the maximum allowed by law was two. At the time, she was 42 years old and was head of the 31st Control Court of Caracas. President Chavez was, to say the

[7] Vol.12 Issue 2/20.

[8] Citing Pérez Perdono 2004-367, in L Louza, La Independencia del Poder Judicial a Partir de la Constitucion de 1999, 30 Politeia 35, [2007]

least, displeased at the decision. On live television he ordered her arrest. He subsequently called her a *"bandit"* and applauded her arrest and said she should be put away in prison for 30 years. He also alleged that she had been bribed, a charge in respect of which no evidence was ever produced and which she has always denied. She was put into a prison cell near prisoners that she had herself condemned to jail. According to her lawyer she was repeatedly raped in prison by government employees. She was ultimately released on house arrest three and a half years later in June of 2013 and then tried 10 years later in 2019 and sentenced to 5 years for "spiritual corruption". She was released again shortly afterwards because of international pressure but she has been banned from speaking to the press or leaving the country.

Many international organizations condemned the treatment of Judge Afiuni amongst them, the United Nations working group on arbitrary detention, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, the Law Society of England & Wales, the IBA and the US Department of State.

But perhaps the most articulate criticism, easily transferred to other Heads of State, came from the European Parliament who on 8 July 2010, just about 7 months after her arrest, stated that it *"Condemns the public statements made by the President of the Republic of Venezuela, insulting and denigrating the judge, demanding a maximum sentence and requesting a modification of the law to enable a more severe penalty to be imposed; considers that these statements are aggravating the circumstances of her detention and constitute an attack on the independence of the judiciary by the President of a nation, who should be its first guarantor."*[9]

The second example that I would like to give comes from the United States. In 2010, the US Supreme Court decided in *Citizens United v Federal Election Commission* that the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, known as the McCain-Feingold Act infringed the First Amendment thereby opening the door to unlimited corporate spending on election campaigns. This in turn gave rise to what is known as SuperPACs where individuals, whose own political contributions were limited, combined in a corporate body to by-pass limits on personal spending. Like many controversial decisions by the US Supreme Court this was a 5-4 majority. However, six days after the ruling, President Obama in his State of the Union address, criticised the decision saying that Citizens United *"reversed a century of law that I believe will open the floodgates for special interests, including foreign corporations, to spend without limit within our elections."*

As is usual, some of the justices of the Supreme Court were present at the State of the Union address and Justice Alito shook his head and apparently uttered the words *"Not true"*. Both protocol and decorum of course required that the justices simply sit there and take it. Subsequently, President Obama came in for criticism for having said this and Chief Justice Roberts told law students at the University of Alabama that the situation in which the justices found themselves on that occasion was *"very troubling"*.

The final example is more recent and probably more well known namely, in 2017 when President Trump lashed out at a federal court decision temporarily blocking enforcement of a controversial

[9] European Parliament Resolution of 8 July 2010 on Venezuela.

travel ban contained in a Presidential Executive Order. President Trump famously called US District Judge James L Robart a *"so called judge"* and said his decision was ridiculous.

Now, on the one hand, it is surely healthy, particularly in a democracy, for judicial decisions to be subject to analysis and reasoned debate and criticism. I see no reason in principle why the Executive or the Legislature should not engage in such debate. After all, judicial decisions, particularly in the area of constitutional challenge and judicial review frequently criticise the Legislature or the Executive. There is surely no reason why the decisions of judges should be immune from criticism. The fact that the traditional role of the judge is not to enter the debate and defend the decision after it has been delivered, cannot be a reason why the decision ought not be criticised. Afterall, they had adequate opportunity to explain in advance why the decision is the right one. It is usually in circumstances where those reasons are not particularly convincing or where they needlessly or imprudently inject themselves into what in truth is a political debate, that they lay themselves open to criticism.

But here I think is the crunch. The Rule of Law depends on judges who conscientiously apply the law and do so independently of the other branches of government, without fear or favour. If the Executive does not like a decision, it can promote a change in the law. If the Legislature doesn't like a decision it can change the law. That might be difficult if it comes to constitutional change but it can be done.

Members of the Executive and the Legislature need to set and observe the standards for what is right and permissible criticism and what is not. Criticising the outcome is not right criticism unless you can properly demonstrate that the outcome is wrong in law or worse, corrupt. Further, it can surely never be right to criticise a particular decision while it might be appealed and it can never be right to criticise based on irrelevant matters or intrusion into a judge's privacy or that of their family that is meant to intimidate and designed to undermine a decision on the basis or irrelevancies.

The separation of powers, the Rule of Law – these are all delicate things and appearances matter. Political leaders need to be careful to avoid intimidation or even giving the impression that the Executive or the Legislature is trying to intimidate or undermine confidence in the judiciary or control the outcome of litigation.

The words used are important and also important is whether the criticism is directed to the decision or is a personalised attack on the judge, which is why President Trump came in for so much criticism for referring to a *"so called judge"*.

The occasion of the criticism and the maintenance of respect, and the appearance of respect, between the three branches, is also important, which is why President Obama, even though he was clearly criticising the decision itself, came in for criticism.

The words and actions of President Chavez, are clearly of an entirely different order and character to what I have referred to in relation to President Obama and President Trump. The words and actions of President Chavez had the object and effect of intimidating the judiciary and undermining their independence.

I mentioned how important it is for members of the Executive and Legislature to set the standard for right criticism. This involves not just a negative restraint – restraint from criticism that is not proper or right but a positive obligation.

If members of the judiciary are unfairly criticised or targeted in a personal way, the Legislature and the Executive have a responsibility to speak out and put a stop to it. After all, they have a co-equal responsibility to support and maintain the Rule of Law.

The most notorious example of this in our times in my view is the disgraceful front-page headline in the Daily Mail of 4 November 2016 under the photographs of the judges concerned in deciding that Brexit could not be triggered without a Westminster vote, describing the Lord Chief Justice and two of his colleagues as *"Enemies of the People"*. I think we all agree that that was a low point but it begs a question about the inadequacy of education about the rule of law when a person holding the post of political editor of a national newspaper can pen a piece like this and the newspaper publishes it.

Many in society, including especially ourselves as lawyers, realise how fortunate we are in the countries in which we live that we do not have a judiciary that is intimidated or cowed by government, that is conscientious and diligent. But the effect of these types of actions by those in authority who are held by ordinary people in high esteem is corrosive and if it continues, what we take for granted will not so easily be available to our children and grandchildren.

There are challenges to the Rule of Law in every country but the challenges that we saw to the Rule of Law in the United States, a country that has contributed so much to the cause of democracy worldwide, during the presidency of President Trump are indeed worrying. I refer not only to the attacks on judges but other matters such as the refusal to accept the election results, and the assault on the Capitol at a time when a critical vote on the transfer of power was being taken.

What is important to note however, is that unlike Venezuela, in the United States, the one branch of government that held firm was the judiciary. Time and time again they upheld the law even though it was not the result that either the President or the Republican party wanted and regardless of what President had appointed them. It held firm because it is an independent judiciary with respect for the Rule of Law and where the independence of the judiciary is reinforced at least at federal level, by security of tenure.

So, we have seen how threats to the Rule of Law can come from various sources and in different shapes and forms. A citizenry that is not educated about the Rule of Law and not convinced about its importance poses a serious threat, particularly in a democratic society. Political leaders of the other branches of government who do not respect the Rule of Law and the role of an independent judiciary pose a serious threat. However, we would be foolish if we did not recognize that another serious threat can come from within the judicial branch of government itself.

How individual judges behave, both on and off the bench, while judges and after retirement can affect the way in which people perceive the judiciary and the respect that they have for the institution. Judicial independence cannot be allowed to become a shield against misconduct. We as

lawyers are only too much aware of the challenges faced by the judiciary posed by lack of resources. Nevertheless, excessive delays in giving judgment, inefficiencies in the court system and inadequate or incomplete reasoning in judgments, all impact negatively on the public perception of the judiciary.

For example, in the United States, the US Supreme Court does not have a code of conduct. Indeed, the justices of the US Supreme Court are the only federal judges not bound by a Code of Conduct. In contrast, there has been an exemplary statement of ethics for the judiciary in Northern Ireland since at least February of 2007. In the South ethical guidelines were adopted much later by the Judicial Council in February of 2022 following the establishment of a statutory basis for such guidelines by the Judicial Council Act of 2019.

So it is not just the Executive and the Legislature that has an obligation to protect judicial independence, the judicial branch also has.

Ultimately of course, whether a country observes the rule of law is **not a matter susceptible to a "yes" or "no" answer**. It is a question of degree. No country perfectly observes the rule of law and the rule of law faces constant challenges.

There are many other on-going challenges to the rule of law which, here in Ireland, we know about only too well. For example, the intimidation of witnesses, the public interest in the protection of sources and methods of intelligence gathering particularly in terrorism cases, all have implications for a fair trial. A further endemic challenge is the monetary and other costs of litigation for example the invasion of privacy, the delay in getting a decision and the way in which these deter effective access to a judicial remedy. Solving these problems while still observing the rule of law takes careful thought by qualified and intelligent people dedicated to upholding, not subverting, the rule of law.

There is no room for complacency – not even in the Western World. I mentioned the World Justice Program that publishes annually a ranking of countries in terms of their observance of the rule of law. It may (or may not) come as a surprise to you to know that in its last report, the United States, only ranked 26th out of 140 countries. To put that into context, Ireland was 10th and the United Kingdom 15th. That is not a cause for satisfaction in the United States nor ought it to be a cause for complacency in Ireland or the United Kingdom.

Cognizant of all of that, we have established a new program in the Academy. It is called the Rule of Law Education & Advocacy Program or RoLEAP – as a short acronym. The Academy has a number of programs – all linked in some way to the rule of law. One of the missions of the Academy is, as I have said, to promote the rule of law. However, up until now, we did not have a program that specifically targeted two areas where action is much needed. Those are education about the rule of law and advocacy for the rule of law.

The great need for education and advocacy in both of these areas has become clear to me for many years. The attacks by the former US President, President Trump, on the judiciary and the election process – attacks which necessitated the issue of statements on behalf of the Academy by my

predecessors – brought into sharp focus the need for more work to be done on education and advocacy about the Rule of Law.

Civics is no longer being taught as a subject in schools in the United States. Throughout the western world, the level of knowledge of our systems of government and the functioning of democratic society is poor. This translates into a lack of appreciation for democracy and the rule of law and what they stand for. This in turn has serious societal effects in low turnouts at elections and worse, a willingness to cast one's vote in favour of candidates and political parties espousing anti-democratic and totalitarian views who themselves attach little value to democracy or the rule of law.

As I have said, the purpose of this new program is to promote education and advocacy about the rule of law. We envisage that it can do this in several ways. First, it can collate material which is already available and place the most valuable items at the disposal of our Fellows and members of the public on our website.

Secondly, with access to this material we want to encourage our Fellows to volunteer to go to schools and universities and speak about the rule of law. We envisage in due course, that the Academy might prepare a structured half day teaching course that would lead to an Academy diploma for students and this program could then be replicated by Fellows in their own cities or states. Teachers and parents should also be welcome to attend such programs. None of this is unique. ABOTA is already quite active in this area as is the National Association of Women's Judges in the United States – amongst others. What is new is that the Academy will have a specific program targeting education and advocacy and I believe that by having such a program the Academy can, as the years go by, make a positive contribution to this issue worldwide.

I would encourage your own Bar, if you are not already doing something similar, to consider it. It behoves all of us to play our part in arresting the slide in the observance of the rule of law that we witness in many countries. Organisations of lawyers worldwide should be at the forefront of this campaign – not on our own, as an elite group, but rather as educators of those who benefit with every breath they take from the rule of law – our fellow citizens.

Thank you for your attention.