

IBA LAUNCHES "50/50 BY 2030", A GENDER GAP IN LAW STUDY

Posted on 10/03/2021



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On the occasion of International Women's Day 2021, the International Bar Association (IBA)

announced the launch of an ambitious first-of-its-kind, nine-year global project titled "50/50 by 2030"



The study aims to uncover the root-causes of the lack of gender parity at the most senior levels of the legal profession, identify whether diversity initiatives introduced to address this disparity are having any impact, and to provide practical conclusions and guidance to the profession. Titled "50/50 by 2030" – a reference to the aspiration of the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goal No 5 on gender equality – the project is supported by the LexisNexis Rule of Law Foundation.

The overarching goal of the project is to provide a blueprint by 2030 for achieving gender parity in the highest levels of private practice, in-house positions, the public sector, and the judiciary. Research will be undertaken across 15 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and North America, and will seek to identify the barriers to and track the progress of, realising equal representation of women in senior legal roles.

IBA president **Sternford Moyo** said: "We need a global legal profession that not only understands and appreciates the need for diversity and gender equality but will take action to ensure their realisation. We cannot continue to have so few eminently qualified and capable women denied parity in senior roles. I have made understanding and effecting change in these areas' priorities of my presidency of the IBA. So, I am delighted by the launch of this important, long-term project and for the committed technological, analytical and employee support from longstanding partners LexisNexis Rule of Law Foundation."

Almudena Arpón de MENDÍVIL (pictured), IBA vice president and partner at Gómez-Acebo & Pombo in Madrid, Spain, commented: "Despite good intentions, despite the merits and talent of so many women, we still don't reach the most senior positions across the legal sector mainly due to discriminatory obstacles placed in our paths. This directly clashes with the principles defended by our profession. The legal sector cannot afford this contradiction and should lead by example. With the benefit of raised general awareness around discrimination, it is time for increased action. Through the "50/50 by 2030" global study announced today, the IBA aspires to build global empirical evidence on the barriers causing the disparity in figures between women and men in senior roles and to put forward remedies to rectify the situation in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality. We are committed to developing solutions that will bring about lasting change to reflect the broader profession and society as a whole."

The IBA study – with data collection and analysis in 2021, 2024, 2027 and 2030 – will be the first to provide global information from law firms, bar associations, law societies, government, public prosecution, in-house lawyers, and the judiciary over an extended period. The compiled and detailed information on measures enacted towards gender equality and the tracking of their impact will provide important insight into how the profession is, or is not, changing.

"As a global organisation, we recognise and applaud the IBA in launching this project," said **Ian McDougall**, executive vice president and general counsel of LexisNexis Legal & Professional, and

president of the LexisNexis Rule of Law Foundation. "Its potential to drive meaningful change towards the quest for gender equality in the legal profession is an important contribution to this major challenge. We strongly believe diversity and inclusion are critical to our future. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion earned us a top 100 placement in Equileap's Ranking, an assessment of more than 3,000 companies against 19 commitments, including gender balance in the workplace, equal compensation, work-life balance, policies promoting gender equality, and commitment to women's empowerment. So, this IBA initiative aligns, once again, with the aims and ambition of LexisNexis."

The project is being led by IBA Legal Policy & Research Unit, IBA Diversity and Inclusion Council, with support and input from the IBA Women Lawyers' Interest Group.

Fiona McLeod AO SC, senior counsel and co-chair of the IBA Diversity & Inclusion Council, commented: "This landmark global project promises to identify the key inhibitors of women lawyer's advancement and identify the most effective measures undertaken to address this longstanding problem. The IBA Diversity & Inclusion Council is proud to lead this ambitious undertaking and looks forward to working closely with the IBA Legal Policy & Research Unit and LexisNexis in the delivery of this work over the next decade."

Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, director of the IBA's Human Rights Institute and frequent broadcaster on law and women's rights commented: "The law needs good women at the most senior levels; for too long women have been denied justice in aspects of their lives because the law was created from a male perspective and embedded in the fiction that the law is neutral. To secure just outcomes and public trust, the law in all our countries must change. I know from my international work that this is a global issue. We need more female lawyers at the top. More senior partners in law firms, more senior judges. The discourse on any subject is improved when it involves diverse voices. This is the route to real justice."