

**U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Remarks for
IAWJ Conference
May 27, 2016**

It is a special pleasure to welcome you to Washington, D.C. for IAWJ's 13th Biennial Conference. The Association's amazing growth is cause for celebration. I recall the launching of the National Association of Women Judges in the United States in 1979. At the 1989 annual Conference of that organization in this Capital City, through the prodigious effort of NAWJ founding member Arline Pacht, 54 judges from over 30 countries were in attendance. Their enthusiasm, Arline reported, was beyond her wildest expectation. She was determined to keep the spirit of international rapport engendered at that Conference vibrant. And her determination, widely applauded by Conference participants, sparked the birth of the IAWJ.

The International Association had its inaugural Conference, in conjunction with the NAWJ's 14th Annual Conference, in San Diego, California, in 1992. Fittingly, Arline Pacht was named first President. Eighty women from more than 32 countries attended. At this 13th IAWJ Conference, eighty has grown to 885 women, and countries represented, from 32 to 83. What accounts for that remarkable progress? Although different perspectives and experiences are reflected in this audience, we all share a zeal to make our systems of justice more user friendly, more attuned to women's needs and aspirations, more responsive to all of the people law exists (or should exist) to serve.

In my long life, I have seen great changes. When I entered law school, women were only 3% of the legal profession in the United States, no women were on the faculty of the law school I attended, only one woman had ever served on a U.S. federal appellate court. Today, about half the nation's law students are women, one-quarter of our federal judges are women, including three of the nine composing the U.S. Supreme Court bench. Women fill 20% of U.S. law school deanships and women serve as General Counsel to 21% of Fortune 500 companies. That is the bright side.

The bleak side, most people in poverty in this country are women and children, women's earnings are still notably less than the earnings of men with comparable education and experience, our workplaces do not adequately accommodate the demands of childbearing and childrearing, we have yet to devise effective ways to ward off sexual harassment at work, and domestic violence in our homes.

Yet our problems pale in comparison to those many of the brave women gathered here encounter. Women judges in troubled nations are striving to overcome corruption and ancient traditions that contribute to denial of the most basic human rights to women and girls. The intelligence and courage of so many of you inspire others in your country and elsewhere to follow in your way.

Women in positions of authority, and that includes members of this assemblage, can contribute importantly to repairing tears in our society and to the humanity of the decisions our courts make. As my dear colleague, first woman on the Supreme Court of the United States, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, counseled:

"For both men and women the first step in getting power is to become visible to others, and then to put on an impressive show As women achieve power, the barriers will fall. As society sees what women can do, as women see what women can do, there will be more women out there doing things, and we'll all be better off for it."

You have an engaging, fully packed schedule from today through Sunday. May you enjoy the discussions and events and relish the opportunities to listen to, and learn from, each other.

Every good wish.