

**Speech by IAWJ President Susana Medina de Rizzo After taking the Oath of Office, Closing Ceremony, Sunday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the International Association of Women Judges**

With great honor I assume the Presidency of the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ). I appreciate and I am grateful for the confidence that women judges of the whole world have placed in me.

The position I have been honored, represents a big responsibility and a real challenge. I promise you all to work with vocation, passion and commitment in favour of all women's human rights; but specially for the rights of the weakest ones, the ones who suffer, the ones who less have, the ones who only have their own existence and put it in our hands. I am fully aware that the rights of each woman, is our duty to fulfill.

I will work to achieve the goals of the IAWJ founder, Justice Arline Patch. The ones she bore in mind when she created this Association, which today has more than 5.000 members in more than 80 countries. My special recognition to her and to those women who held the Presidency: Pacita Canizares, Susan Devine, Carmen Argibay, Mella Carroll, Laetitia Mukasa Kikonyogo, Jane Mathews, Graciela Dixon, Leslie Alden, Brenda Hale, Eusebia Munuo y Teresita Leonardo De Castro. My deep admiration and respect for the work of each of them.

I will restless work, following the pathway led by these women committed with gender equality, for an independent, effective and efficient justice service, with a gender perspective and close to the people. I will work for a justice service with a human face, which enables the access to the most vulnerable members of society.

To achieve these goals, I'm going to invite the IAWJ members of different continents, countries, judicial systems, languages and cultures to build bridges that foster communication, knowledge, friendship and training.

I am sure that it is better and more important to build bridges than to erect walls. Only in this way a global, plural, egalitarian, inclusive, just, and equitable society will be possible. Our challenge is to build bridges to achieve the peace and development of our people. That's our challenge and we, women judges, we are in an unbeatable condition to face it.

I gently urge you, my sisters, to take a leading role in this work and lead the change together, because as the dear and fondly remembered Carmen Argibay always said: "*we are more together*".

Thank you very much. I warmly embrace each and every woman who has the privilege of being part of this association.