

*Call for Speakers*  
*18<sup>th</sup> IAWJ Biennial Conference Quebec City, Canada, May 2027*

The International Association of Women Judges announces a call for speaker proposals for its **18th Biennial Conference**, taking place in **Quebec City, Canada**, from **May 18-21, 2027**. We are eager to delve into our conference theme: **‘Women Judges: Strong and Free.’** We are looking forward to some dynamic presentations and discussions on the various ways we as judicial leaders can exemplify these qualities. IAWJ members (Justices, Judges, Magistrates – at all court levels), Amicus Judicii (Friends of the IAWJ), Experts and Academics are invited to submit speaker proposals under the plenary sub-themes outlined below. There will be different formats depending on the proposals. The proposed presentation should be no more than 20 minutes maximum. Visual aids (including non-text heavy PowerPoints) are encouraged but not required. We hope to have an opportunity for audience participation in a question and answer format.

SPEAKER REQUIREMENTS

- Speakers must register for and attend the conference in person.
- Speakers are responsible for paying the full registration fee, unless awarded a scholarship for a reduced registration fee.
- Travel, accommodation, and personal expenses are the responsibility of the speaker.
- Invitations to speak are non-transferable and apply only to the individual selected.
- The IAWJ reserves the right to modify, add, or cancel speaker panels, as the number of proposals received for each panel may vary.
- Speakers are required to ensure that their presentation topics align with the conference sub-themes.

### ***Selection Criteria***

A successful proposal should be thought-provoking, informative, and engaging, offering practical insights that resonate with and benefit the diverse global audience of conference delegates. Priority will be given to a diverse range of speakers from various types and levels of courts. While written papers are not required, they may be submitted for inclusion on the conference website. PowerPoint presentations or other visual aids are encouraged.

### ***Submission***

If you are interested in being selected as a speaker, please complete the [speaker proposal submission form here](#). All proposal summaries must be submitted to the IAWJ by **5:00 PM EDT on Friday July 3rd, 2026**. To submit a proposal, please send all required application materials to [office@iawj.org](mailto:office@iawj.org).

#### **Important:**

- All required documents must be submitted as ONE merged PDF file or ONE ZIP file.
- The file name must include the full name of the individual submitting the proposal.
- Incomplete submissions or submissions sent in multiple separate files may not be considered.

As a respected platform in the field of law, our conference consistently attracts leading members of the judiciary, academics, practitioners, and thought leaders from around the world. Due to a limited number of speaking slots, we regret that not all proposals can be accommodated. **Only selected proposals will receive confirmation by August 17, 2026.**

We look forward to your valuable contribution, which will enrich the conference discussions. Please find an overview of the conference sub-themes below.

***2027 IAWJ Biennial Programme and Education Committee***

***Conference Sub-themes:***

***Courage; Inspire; Collaborate; Unite; Lead; Transform; Adapt; Innovate***

▪ **Wednesday 19 May 2027**

***Plenary Session A: Transform: Access to Justice: Diversity, Equality and Inclusion***

***Synopsis:***

For this plenary session the IAWJ seeks speakers able to share by practical means, knowledge and experiences on access to justice for vulnerable persons such as persons with disabilities, persons from different cultural backgrounds and LGBTQIA+ persons and how judicial leadership can transform the experiences these persons have when participating in our justice systems.

We are looking forward to presentation topics promoting lively debate, raising awareness and enhancing understanding for the plight of persons in the stated vulnerable categories. Intersecting identities—such as race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and socio-economic status - exacerbate vulnerabilities, making persons more susceptible to violence and abuse and also face challenges when accessing justice. Reference to case studies, legislation and strategies, which illustrate the impact on access to justice on the themes of diversity, equality and inclusion is encouraged.

▪ **Wednesday 19 May 2027**

***Plenary Session B: Uniting Different Cultures: The Interface Between Colonial and Customary Laws***

***Synopsis:***

Speakers are invited to explore the complexities that arise where (post)colonial law meets indigenous communities, with a particular focus on the ways in which indigenous cultures can enhance delivery of justice. We call on speakers from various countries to share experiences and expertise in the adjudication of cases in which justice systems can respect customary practices in order to include and be responsive to the needs of our indigenous populations while remaining faithful to constitutional and statutory norms. This topic should also address how the tensions between modern-day colonial based justice systems can be resolved respectfully and therefore more effectively.

▪ **Wednesday 19 May 2027**

**Plenary Session C: *Lead : The Role of Women Judges in Preserving the Rule of Law while Preserving and Enhancing Judicial Independence***

**Synopsis:** brings together women speakers from diverse regions of the world to examine the importance of preserving the rule of law in contemporary societies, together with judicial independence. It offers a comparative overview of the health of democratic and judicial institutions, highlighting both shared challenges and regional differences. The speakers will assess the strength of judicial systems in their respective countries, as well as the key factors shaping recent developments, including political, social, cultural, and technological influences. A central focus will be public trust in these institutions. The discussion will explore signs of erosion—such as perceptions of bias, lack of transparency, delays, or misinformation—as well as the underlying causes driving these trends. It will also consider how trust can be rebuilt and sustained.

We are interested in hearing from judicial leaders who have been confronted with, or experienced, attempts to erode Judicial Independence and who have met those challenges with interesting and innovative solutions. We are looking for speakers who, by their efforts, have contributed to the preservation of the law, contributed to the protection of democratic values, countered outside pressures and fostered public confidence in the Courts, whether through collaboration, outreach, communication approaches, community connection or otherwise.

We hope to emphasize solutions aimed at improving transparency, modernizing justice systems, and enhancing communication between institutions and citizens. The role of civic education and the media will also be considered.

Overall, the discussion aims to identify shared challenges and effective practices to strengthen the resilience of democratic institutions and reinforce confidence in the rule of law while preserving judicial independence.

- **Thursday 20 May 2027**  
**Plenary Session D: *Courage: Gender Apartheid***

***Synopsis:***

For this topic, IAWJ is seeking speakers to explore gender apartheid -- systems of oppression and domination based on gender. We welcome speakers who can address how systems of gender apartheid operate in the world today, including the laws, policies, and social restrictions through which they are maintained, and the effects these systems have on women, girls, and LGBTQIA+ people.

We are also interested in speakers who can reflect on the broader political, social, and legal implications of these conditions, as well as the forms of resistance and advocacy they have generated. Speakers on this panel are further invited to address ongoing efforts to secure international recognition of gender apartheid and to have it recognized as a crime against humanity under international law.

- **Thursday 20 May 2027**  
**Plenary Session E: *Adapt: Women in Prison: The unique challenges faced by incarcerated women and the role of women judges in addressing them***

**Synopsis:**

This panel will address the many complexities attendant to sentencing a woman to a period of incarceration, with particular focus on unique challenges and hardships faced by incarcerated women. When a judge sends a woman to jail, the sentencing challenge is compounded by the knowledge that (a) women prisoners face challenges that men prisoners do not, (b) that women prisoners are going to be disproportionately affected by aspects of incarceration that are not part of their sentence and (c) that minor children of prisoners are more likely to lose their primary caretaker when a mother is incarcerated than when a father is.

Pregnant women prisoners need access to pre-natal and peri-natal care. Women of child-bearing age need access to feminine hygiene products. Women prisoners are disproportionately at risk of sexual abuse and because of their relatively small numbers are more likely to be detained far from home, making it more difficult to maintain contact with family on the outside. Women inmates are also burdened by the social expectations (and the biological realities) of childbearing and rearing; women bear children while in prison and in many countries retain young children with them while they are incarcerated.

For this panel, we want to hear from women judges who have worked to address these challenges – whether by working toward:

- Policies to avoid or minimize carceral sentences;
- Providing incarcerated women with what they need;
- Protecting women in prison from abuse and inhumane treatment; or
- Addressing the plight of children of incarcerated primary caretakers.

- **Thursday 20 May 2027**  
**Plenary Session F: *Collaboration - the Judicial Role***

**Synopsis:**

This presentation seeks to explore collaborative approaches between judges and advocacy groups that are consistent with the Bangalore Principles on Judicial Conduct. The Bangalore Principles enshrine the values of both “impartiality” and “propriety.” On the one hand, “A judge, like any other citizen, is entitled to the freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly”, while on the other, hand, a judge should conduct herself in a manner that “enhances the confidence of the public, the legal profession and litigants in the impartiality of the judge and of the judiciary.” This

panel looks at ways that individual associations and chapters have partnered with other groups (such as legal aid, law reform or public health NGOs) to provide justice while staying within role constraints.

Additionally, the panel will explore the judicial voice – how we can be better allies to community members, particularly those who are marginalized. Topics for discussion will include how we as judges can use our position for the advancement of women lawyers or law students and other marginalized groups without overstepping our rule and putting ourselves in a position of conflict. What steps can be taken by judges in judicial communication outside the context of issuance of opinions - the support of extra-judicial groups and legislative responses to the traditional restrictions on judicial communications.

**Thursday 20 May 2027**

**Plenary Session G: *Innovate: What challenges do women judges face as AI gains wider acceptance and as ordinary citizens and lawyers increasingly rely on it in the courts?***

**Synopsis:**

In this session, we are looking for women judges with actual personal experience working with AI. What are the risks involved in the particular justice system in which they work regarding the security of the data collected?

Speakers will be specifically called on to address:

- Are there any concerns within their judiciary regarding judicial independence?
- Are there concerns regarding the security and confidentiality of AI processed case data, particularly in countries where erosion of the rule of law is present or perceived by the general public?
- How have you dealt with AI-generated evidence and deepfakes? What authentication standards, if any, have been implemented in your jurisdiction, for example to establish chain-of-custody for digital exhibits?
- What can courts do to guard against the risk AI generated sentencing recommendations (predictive tools) infringing rights embedded in national and international law and resulting in unfair outcomes for members of marginalized subpopulations or other groups facing particular social challenges?
- Could AI-based mediation or arbitration improve access to justice for vulnerable people?

The speakers will share their experience of the tools they use as well as the policies and guidelines implemented in their jurisdiction.

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