

IBA President to launch report on bullying and sexual harassment in the legal profession, at NBA AGC

At the invitation of the **President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Paul Usoro, Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN)**, **[Horacio Bernardes Neto, President of the International Bar Association](#)** (IBA), will give an address at the opening ceremony of the 59th **Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Annual General Conference (AGC)** on Monday 26 August 2019. The following day, Mr Bernardes will launch the IBA's landmark report ***Us Too? Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession*** and discuss the issues the report raises. He will also give a keynote address at the NBA's Rule of Law Symposium, on the importance of promoting and protecting the rule of law. The full provisional programme is available **[here](#)**.



Horacio Bernardes Neto
President, International Bar Association



Paul Usoro, SAN
President, Nigerian Bar Association

On Mr Bernardes' imminent visit, Mr Usoro SAN commented: *'On behalf of the NBA, I am delighted that IBA President Horacio Bernardes Neto is to participate in our Annual General Conference. He has stated that Africa is to be a priority of his two-year tenure with the aim of increasing the presence of the IBA in Africa and of Africa in the IBA. I am looking forward to mutual co-operation on his initiatives that will bring enduring change to the legal profession, including addressing the insidious issues of bullying and sexual harassment. This visit will build on and strengthen the existing relationship between our two organisations.'*

Nigeria is the latest stop on an IBA global campaign trail to bring attention to the startling rates of bullying and sexual harassment in the legal profession and to work to halt such behaviour. The campaign will take place across six continents. So far, major

international cities in Europe, The Americas and Australia have held well-received launch events. Next month the report will be launched in Asia, in South Korea's capital city, Seoul, during the [2019 IBA Annual Conference](#).

Commenting on his participation at the NBA AGC Mr Bernardes said: *'I am deeply honoured to have been invited by President Usoro, SAN, to attend this prestigious gathering, and I am very much looking forward to greeting longstanding friends of the IBA, as well as meeting anew many of Nigeria's fine jurists on this trip'*. On the report, he said: *'It is deeply shameful that our profession, predicated on the highest ethical standards, is rife with such negative workplace behaviours. Bar associations, law societies and law firms must lead by example and expose unacceptable behaviour. The IBA is working to ensure that eradicating bullying and sexual harassment is prioritised. We must work for positive change.'*

The 130-page landmark report draws on data collected from nearly 7,000 surveyed legal professionals from 135 countries, conducted by the [IBA's Legal Policy & Research Unit](#) (LPRU) in collaboration with consultancy firm [Acritas](#). Respondents participated from workplaces across the legal spectrum, including law firms, in-house, barristers' chambers, government and the judiciary. The results provide insight into the nature, prevalence and impact of bullying and sexual harassment across the sector.

The findings from the survey respondents include:

- one in two women and one in three men have experienced bullying in the workplace;
- one in three women and one in 14 men have been sexually harassed;
- in 57 per cent of bullying cases, incidents were not reported, with the figure rising to 75 per cent for episodes of sexual harassment;
- there is considerable adverse impact, with 65 per cent of bullied practitioners having left or considered leaving their workplace as a result;
- workplaces are not doing enough to prevent or adequately respond to misconduct, with policies regarding bullying and sexual harassment present in only 53 per cent of workplaces; and
- just one in five workplaces have conducted training in recognising and reporting problems in these areas.

[Click here](#) to download a Report summary.

IBA LPRU Legal Advisor Kieran Pender, who led the project, said: *'Our research found that targets of bullying and sexual harassment very rarely report the misconduct to their workplaces or regulators. They don't report because of the status of the perpetrator, fear of repercussions and because the incidents are often endemic to the workplace. These issues affect all parts of the profession, from entry-level trainees to attorneys-general. We must take responsibility and develop standards of conduct to make it clear that this behaviour has no place in our profession.'*

The recommendations set out by the IBA to aid the legal profession in urgently addressing workplace bullying and sexual harassment focus on raising greater awareness of these issues; implementing and revising policies and standards; the importance of improved training; increased dialogue and greater accountability across the profession; increasing intra-profession dialogue and best practice sharing; developing flexible reporting models; and maintaining momentum to achieve genuine change.

Noting that bullying and sexual harassment are not unique to the legal sector, **Mark Ellis, IBA Executive Director**, said: *'These types of behaviour are insidious and must be confronted. The legal profession has been called upon regularly to advise other industries on bullying and sexual harassment. However, our ability to drive broader change is undermined if our own house is not in order. The IBA will promote cross-sector collaboration to ensure these societal-wide issues are addressed.'*

Baroness Helena Kennedy, QC, Director of the [IBA's Human Rights Institute](#), said in her closing remarks at the London launch: *'Lawyers and other legal professionals must be able to work in environments that are safe and supportive. Bullying and sexual harassment is never appropriate, and the profession must do all it can to stamp out such misconduct.'*

The NBA AGC will be held from **August 23 – 29** at the [Convention Centre of the Eko Hotel and Suites, Victoria Island, Lagos](#).

ENDS

Notes to the Editor

1. [Click here](#) for a short biography of Horacio Bernardes Neto, IBA President and senior partner of leading Brazilian law firm [Motta Fernandes Advogados](#).
2. [Click here](#) for full details about the NBA AGC.
3. The IBA President's participation
Monday August 26
0900 – 1100: Opening Ceremony Address

Tuesday August 27
1100 – 1230: Launch of IBA Report on Bullying and Sexual Harassment
1400 – 1600: Rule of Law Symposium, Why Rule of Law?
4. Africa related links: IBA President Horacio Bernardes Neto and IBA Executive Director Mark Ellis visited South Africa in June 2019. The visit was organised by the [Southern Africa Litigation Centre](#) (SALC) and Keith Baker, IBA Honorary Life Member. Read more here: www.ibanet.org/IBA-President-and-Executive-Director-visit-South-Africa.aspx
5. The full report ***Us Too? Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession*** is available to download free of charge from the IBA website at: www.ibanet.org/bullying-and-sexual-harassment.aspx
6. Quick facts:

- one in two female respondents and one in three male respondents have experienced bullying in the workplace;
- one in three female respondents and one in 14 male respondents have been sexually harassed in connection with work;
- 57 per cent of bullying cases and 75 per cent of sexual harassment cases go unreported;
- 65 per cent of bullied practitioners have left or considered leaving their workplace; and
- only 22 per cent of legal workplaces have been trained to address bullying and sexual harassment.

7. The launch event of ***Us Too? Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession*** was held at law firm **Herbert Smith Freehills LLP** in London, England, on Wednesday 15 May 2019. **Dame Laura Cox DBE**, who led the Independent Inquiry on Bullying and Harassment of House of Commons Staff, provided the keynote address.
8. The project was developed in collaboration with an IBA working group, consisting of 16 IBA members from across the globe representing all IBA Regional Fora and relevant committees. **Emerita Professor Margaret Thornton**, **Emerita Professor Patricia Eastaerl AM** and **Kate Eastman SC** acted as independent experts, reviewing a draft of the report. The project was also supported by many of the IBA's 190 bar associations and law societies and 200 group member law firms, from over 170 countries.
9. A global engagement campaign, from May to September 2019, is underway with events having taken place in:
 - London
 - Edinburgh;
 - Mexico City;
 - New York City;
 - Washington DC;
 - Brussels;
 - Sydney;
 - Canberra; and
 - Melbourne

For the full listing, check the IBA website at: www.ibanet.org/bullying-and-sexual-harassment.aspx

The campaign will culminate with a showcase session at the **2019 IBA Annual Conference in Seoul**, with **Julia Gillard**, a former lawyer and now Chair of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at King's College London, delivering the keynote address.

10. The [International Bar Association](#) (IBA) – the global voice of the legal profession – is the foremost organisation for international legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies. Established in 1947, shortly after the creation of the [United Nations](#), it was born out of the conviction that an organisation made up of the world's bar associations could contribute to global stability and peace through the administration of justice.

In the ensuing 70 years since its creation, the organisation has evolved from an association comprised exclusively of bar associations and law societies to one that incorporates individual international lawyers and entire law firms. The present membership is comprised of more than 80,000 individual international lawyers from most of the world's leading law firms and some 190 bar associations and law societies spanning more than 170 countries.

The IBA has considerable expertise in providing assistance to the global legal community, and through its global membership, it influences the development of international law reform and helps to shape the future of the legal profession throughout the world.

The IBA's administrative office is in London, United Kingdom. Regional offices are located in: São Paulo, Brazil; Seoul, South Korea; and Washington DC, United States, while the International Bar Association's [International Criminal Court and International Criminal Law Programme](#) (ICC & ICL) is managed from an office in The Hague, the Netherlands.

The [International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute](#) (IBAHRI), an autonomous and financially independent entity, works to promote, protect and enforce human rights under a just rule of law, and to preserve the independence of the judiciary and the legal profession worldwide.

For further information please contact:

Romana St. Matthew - Daniel
Press Office
International Bar Association
4th Floor, 10 St Bride Street,
London EC4A 4AD

Mobile: +44 (0)7940 731 915
Direct Line: +44 (0)20 7842 0094
Main Office: +44 (0)20 7842 0090
Fax: +44 (0)20 7842 0091

Email: romana.daniel@int-bar.org
Website: www.ibanet.org