

Press Release

Inter-American Court of Human Rights

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I/A Court H.R. Protecting Rights

OPENING CEREMONY OF THE INTER-AMERICAN JUDICIAL YEAR 2021: "HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE CENTER OF RECOVERY"



San Jose, Costa Rica, March 22, 2021.- The Inter-American Year of the Judiciary 2021 officially opened last Friday, March 19, 2021 with the participation of the President of the Inter-American Court, Judge Elizabeth Odio Benito, Vice-President Judge Patricio Pazmiño Freire and the other Judges on the Court. The keynote lecture was given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mrs. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, who spoke on: "Global challenges for human rights in a post-pandemic world."

The event was attended by government representatives of the Inter-American Court's host country, Costa Rica, representatives of the Member States of the Organization of American States, members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to Costa Rica and visitors from International Organizations and civil society.

The President of the Court formally opened the Year of the Judiciary as she expressed solidarity with the victims of COVID-19. She emphasized that, one year after the pandemic was declared, major challenges remain unmet. She noted, however, that the Court was able to adapt and continue its work using remote technologies in order to fulfill its mandate to protect human rights. In the President's own words, "The Inter-American Court has shown itself to be resilient, flexible and adaptable."

She added, "this pandemic has revealed the need to address human rights in all their dimensions—civil and political rights and economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. It has shown us that we need a vision of development that is unified and grounded in human rights, always mindful of interdependence and interconnections. In this pandemic, either we all do well,

or none of us does. There is no one who has not experienced the death of a loved one or a close family member. Even so, COVID-19 has brought into focus the most serious endemic blight in our societies—inequality.” As a result, “this pandemic has reminded us of how far our societies have fallen short. At the same time, it has revealed the value of human solidarity and of working for others. If we hope to recover, we need human rights now more than ever before,” emphasized Judge Odio.

High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet: “Effective recovery must be built on human rights”



United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) Michelle Bachelet asserted that, “ever since its founding, the Inter-American Court has played a central role in fighting impunity and defending human rights in the Americas.” She noted, “[through] its case law, the Court has set standards that serve as human rights milestones for effective protection of persons in such critical areas as the women's rights, the rights of LGBTIQ persons, interdependence between civil and political rights and economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, and more.”

In this sense, added the head of UNHCHR, “the standards and principles set in its case law are used broadly in the Americas and beyond.”

“We are facing a crisis that poses many challenges for human rights. The impact of the pandemic in the region has been compounded, especially in Latin America, by weak social protection systems. This is why effective, lasting recovery demands that we place human rights at the very center of our actions. We need much broader protection system, with special emphasis on the migrant population, indigenous communities and women,” insisted the High Commissioner.

“Discrimination, impunity, lack of access to economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, as well as corruption, intensify the consequences of the humanitarian crisis unleashed by COVID-19. This is why the role of regional human rights courts is so critical, as they set standards that the States must uphold. The challenge that stands before us is to come out of this better than we were before, eliminating all forms of discrimination, bolstering systems of social protection and bringing greater inclusion. The pandemic has clearly shown that none of us will be safe until everyone is safe,” concluded Bachelet.

The video presentation of the conference can be seen [here](#).

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