

Evolving Justice: ASEAN Judges Conference

5-6 Oct 2023
Bangkok, Thailand

Conference Report



JIN
ASEAN



Acknowledgements

The Evolving Justice: ASEAN Judges Conference and this report were made possible by the generous contribution of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) of the U.S. Department of State.

This two-day regional event has been successful thanks to the collaboration between UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub's Judicial Integrity Network in ASEAN and the Thailand Court of Justice and the participation of esteemed judges, legal professionals, development partners and policymakers from the ASEAN region.

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AJNE	Asian Judges Network on Environment
ACO	Authentic Court Orders
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRH	Bangkok Regional Hub
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, U.S. Department of State
JIN	Judicial Integrity Network
LNOB	Leaving No One Behind
OAS	Organization of American States
OGP	Open Government Partnership
RIJA	Red Internacional de Justicia Abierta (International Open Justice Network)
RoLHR	Rule of Law and Human Rights
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TIJ	Thailand Institute of Justice
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNCAC	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WJP	World Justice Project

Background

Goal 16 of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development focuses on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and includes targets to ensure effective, accountable and transparent institutions along with access to justice for all. Further, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) binds States to take measures to strengthen integrity and prevent corruption among members of the judiciary.

The judiciaries in ASEAN have a great responsibility in driving progress towards achieving the sustainable development goals in the region. Judicial integrity and court excellence are a means to ensure that all citizens have equal access to transparent and effective justice. A strong and independent judiciary catalyses sustainable growth and lifts people out of poverty, contributing to fairer, just and peaceful societies.

Aligned with these global goals, and with the support of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), U.S. Department of State, the UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub launched the [Judicial Integrity Network in ASEAN](#), a Network for Judges by Judges, in 2018. The initiative was designed to support countries in pursuing judicial reforms, focusing particularly on transparency, accountability, integrity, accessibility and court excellence.

In 2019, the Supreme Court of Indonesia and UNDP hosted the Second Network Meeting, [“The Path towards Judicial Excellence”](#), where the [Judicial Integrity Self-assessment Checklist](#) was presented as a tool for courts to readily identify measures for improving judicial integrity.

In 2021-2023, JIN ASEAN supported the implementation of country-specific initiatives in [Indonesia](#), [Thailand](#), [Lao PDR](#) and [Vietnam](#), gathered judiciaries for [workshops](#) aimed at strengthening court excellence, and published three research projects: [Gender and Judicial Excellence](#), [Emerging Technologies and Judicial Integrity](#) and [Empowering Judiciaries to Bring ROLHR Leadership to Decisions about Court Technology](#).

On 5-6 October 2023, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub and the Thailand Court of Justice hosted the Third Network Meeting, “Evolving Justice: ASEAN Judges Conference”, in Bangkok, Thailand. The two-day event welcomed over 300 in-person and online participants from 41 countries, including Supreme Court Justices, judges, legal practitioners, government and NGO representatives, academia, development partners and civil society organisations.

Executive Summary

On 5-6 October 2023, the [Evolving Justice: ASEAN Judges Conference](#) convened over 300 participants from the judiciary, academia, international organisations and civil society for discussions and experience sharing. Over the subsequent two days, the event covered a wide range of topics, including judicial excellence, environmental and open justice, innovation in the justice field, and gender equality. Here are the key takeaways:

Multiple ASEAN countries have aligned their judicial Codes of Ethics and Conduct with the Bangalore Principles. UNDP has further supported national efforts to enhance judicial integrity in countries like Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam. UNODC supported Malaysia in judicial conduct and training e-modules aiding judges in effectively implementing Bangalore Principles. Furthermore, Thailand set up a Judicial Training Institute to enhance competence for judges at all levels and Indonesia set up a complaints system to enhance transparency and accountability within the judiciary. [Session recording](#)

National courts are adopting targeted local solutions to advance gender equality in courts, but many challenges persist. In **Nepal**, the National Judicial Academic program institutionalized a gender justice training curriculum. In **New Zealand**, the court incorporated customary practices, behavior, and communication assistance into criminal proceedings. UNDP [supported](#) rendering the electronic-based complaint system **Indonesia** more inclusive and provided gender-responsive capacity-building training for the personnel of the Supreme Court Supervisory Body. In the **Philippines**, although the pandemic led to a reevaluation of work-life boundaries, the perceived burden of balancing family responsibilities with their professional roles prevents women from pursuing higher roles in the judiciary. It is essential to establish a gender-fair courtroom etiquette to guide judges in treating everyone equally. To support gender equality efforts, the UNDP JIN ASEAN Gender Working Group developed two tools: [Gender Audit and a Self-Study Syllabus](#). [Session recording](#)

Countries in the region are actively implementing technological solutions to improve court efficiency, simplify court procedures and increase access to justice. However, implementing technology must not undermine fundamental rights or increase the digital gap in justice. Aware that its online court services lack inclusivity by design, the **Thailand Court of Justice** developed a user-friendly platform for self-litigation, prioritizing the “human touch”, resulting in an increase in the online filling of complaints. Across the region, courts are piloting various technology solutions like e-filing, e-notification, national digital IDs, chatbots and other artificial intelligence solutions. While the adoption of video conferencing by courts has had important benefits in many countries, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of other technologies like artificial intelligence should be carefully studied from the point of view of personal data protection and veracity of information generated. [Session recording](#)

To strike the balance between independence and accountability within judicial systems, both external and internal judicial independence should be upheld. The quality of justice comprises all aspects of the functioning of the justice system. On the one hand, the judiciary is under pressure to meet societal expectations of immediacy and efficiency; on the other, there is an alarming decline in the rule of law globally and a rise of authoritarianism. The three major threats to the rule of law in the Asia Pacific are disinformation, access to justice for minorities, and judicial independence. While the uses of technology, specifically artificial intelligence, could reduce the workload burden of judges and introduce efficiency and transparency, technologies themselves can impose undue influence on judges. [Session recording](#)

Judges' wellbeing is strongly linked to their judicial performance. Excessive workload, poor distribution of resources, ineffective case management system, lack of empathy among colleagues, and pressure from the media contribute to judges' stress. While the Bangalore Principles recognized the significance of judicial wellbeing, it still requires greater awareness raising and judges still need access to professional psychological counselling, peer support, relevant training, and flexible working arrangements. Practicing mindfulness could be a first step for judges as it has proven positive effects on their wellbeing and performance. [Session recording](#)

Open justice systems that leave no one behind are transparent, accountable, and open to public. The Justice Needs Survey conducted by the Thailand Institute of Justice revealed that justice needs are fragmented and vary by age, gender, and area, and that the current justice system is costly and confusing. The lack of judiciary-led commitments related to accountability is a major challenge in achieving open justice within the Open Government Partnership. The Supreme Court has embraced a people-centered approach and implemented several pilot projects from its "[Justice by Design](#)" initiative. Furthermore, the child-friendly justice system pilot in Phuket aims to minimize the trauma experienced by children as they navigate the justice system through changes to the information collection process. [Session recording](#)

To uphold environmental justice, environmental law should become mandatory for all judges. The network of Asia-Pacific judges focused on environmental issues was established over a decade ago. Efforts supporting the network need to be rethought to serve the judges better. UNEP prioritizes capacity building in environmental law through training and e-learning [platform](#), while ADB and UNDP focus on establishing networks for judges. Given that environmental issues are transboundary, an ASEAN environmental tribunal could be established to address these issues. [Session recording](#)

The principles of integrity are never finally closed. The Bangalore Principles were adopted in 2001, with core values for regulating judicial conduct recognised as independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety, equality and finally, competence and diligence.

Recommendations:

1. Prioritise environmental justice and provide more training for judges in handling civil cases related to environmental crimes.
2. Utilize technology within the judicial system to streamline the workload of judges, ensuring that it enhances accessibility to justice while maintaining the inclusive nature of the courts.
3. Explore the possibility of establishing an ASEAN environmental tribunal to address environmental issues that transcend national boundaries.
4. Foster collaboration among the JIN ASEAN Advisory Working Group, JIN ASEAN Gender Working Group, the Asian Judges Network on Environment (AJNE), and other relevant regional networks.
5. Foster a community of practice among the members of the network and all relevant stakeholders for increased interaction, peer learning, exchange of experiences and knowledge sharing.
6. Strengthen Judicial Integrity Network by exploring possibilities of establishing permanent secretariat, rotating chairmanship, regular annual meetings, expanded geographical membership.
7. Consider adding three new principles to the original six Bangalore Principles – courage, empathy for the disadvantaged and non-political stance.



OPENING REMARKS

Livestream recording available [here](#).

The event began with opening remarks from the organizers and partners of the event: Office of the Judiciary of Thailand, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub and U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), followed by a keynote speech from the Supreme Court of Thailand.

Chief Judge Paopun Chobnamtal, Deputy Secretary-General of the Office of the Judiciary of Thailand, welcomed all the participants and emphasized that the meeting was in line with the SDGs and highlighted the significance of access to justice and the rule of law. He informed the audience that the upcoming discussions would revolve around these crucial topics, with a specific emphasis on showcasing judicial processes in each nation in the region. He further emphasized that the aim of the event was to foster cooperation at a regional level, to establish new networks at the agency level, and to enhance judicial processes through knowledge exchange and the creation of a closely-knit network, ultimately working towards improving the judiciary for all.

Mr Gerd Trogemann, Manager - Bangkok Regional Hub for Asia and the Pacific, UNDP, presented the joint event of the Thailand Court of Justice and UNDP aiming to enhance the rule of law, aligning with SDG 16, focusing on transparent institutions and universal access to justice. He extended gratitude to the US Department of State for their support. Mr. Trogemann further mentioned that the conference included participation from various countries, as well as regional bodies from the Caribbean and Europe, emphasizing the global relevance of the discussed topics. Key themes revolved around evolving access to justice and how judiciaries respond to challenges and significant areas of discussions were going to be the implementation of the Bangalore Principles, promoting gender equality in courts, and leveraging technology. Mr. Trogemann highlighted successful outcomes in countries in the region, such as gender-responsive court complaint handling in Indonesia and virtual court hearings in Laos and Viet Nam. He concluded that the event emphasized collective learning for a more just society through collaboration, innovation, and shared commitment to advancing justice within the region and globally.

Mr Daniel A. Lamm, Regional Law Enforcement Program Coordinator, U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) provided a brief history of the INL, which was established in 1978 to combat drug trafficking from Latin America to the United States. Over time, its mission expanded to include stabilization efforts and fighting corruption globally. In 1995, INL focused on foreign assistance, bilateral relationships, reporting, sanctions, and rewards to achieve these goals. The INL collaborated with UNDP to promote justice integrity, independence, and strong, reliable justice systems. Recognizing the critical role of judges in ensuring transparency and accountability, INL established a program facilitating knowledge and experience sharing. The initiative emphasizes integrity and accountability to achieve higher standards and Mr. Lamm extended gratitude to UNDP for its contributions, highlighting the collective efforts in advancing the rule of law.

In her keynote speech, **Justice Suvicha Nagavajra**, President of the Intellectual Property and International Trade Case Division of the Supreme Court of Thailand, pleaded for an adaptable and continuously evolving justice system that meets the changing societal needs. To achieve this, **Justice Nagavajra** highlighted that the justice system should be people-centered and focus on making justice accessible to all while leaving no one behind. Furthermore, the justice system must adapt to societal changes, including technological advancements, demographic shifts, cultural evolution, and emerging global challenges. Leveraging technology is essential to enhance access to justice and to streamline legal processes, ensuring availability to all, irrespective of socioeconomic status or geographic location. The evolving justice system must also embrace inclusivity.

The Court of Justice of Thailand has incorporated the principle of justice accessibility to all into its 2022-2025 Strategic Plan. Practical changes include improvements in the electronic filing system to aid individuals with various legal claims, such as in labor cases, claims in online sale transactions, and petitions for appointment as an estate administrator.

Justice Suvicha Nagavajra encouraged everyone to actively participate in the event, share their insights, and engage in open dialogue with fellow attendees. She highlighted that through collaboration and the exchange of ideas, we can truly evolve our approach to justice.

I. HOW JUDICIARIES IN ASEAN IMPLEMENT THE BANGALORE PRINCIPLES

Livestream recording available [here](#).

PANEL

- Justice Nani Indrawati, Supreme Court of Indonesia
- Justice Khamphay Xayasouk, Supreme People Court of Lao PDR
- Judge Yang Arif Justice Dato' Mary Lim Thiam Suan, Federal Court of Malaysia
- Judge Dr Kanok Jullamon, Research Justice Division of the Supreme Court of Thailand
- Judge Nguyen Hoai Nam Phuong, Court of District 3 of Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam

In Indonesia, the Supreme Court is unique compared to other countries for adjudicating cases and regulating and supervising lower-level judicial bodies. The journey towards establishing ethical guidelines began in 1966, resulting in the first code of ethics for judges in 2000. The official Court of Ethics was established in 2002, with subsequent collaboration between the Supreme Court and the Judicial Commission, both institutions with authority to supervise judges' behavior, to formulate a unified Code of Ethics in 2009. This code was further refined in 2012 to integrate the Bangalore Principles. While the Bangalore Principles revolve around six core values, Indonesia's approach encompasses ten values, including responsibility, high discipline, and acting professionally. Additionally, Indonesia has defined three types of disciplinary sanctions for judges.

Enforcing procedures for judicial ethics include the establishment of a Judges Honorary Panel, serving as a platform for judges' self-defense. Statistical data is collected to monitor these procedures and to assess their effectiveness. For constitutional judges, specific ethics enforcement procedures are in place.

Several initiatives have been jointly implemented by the Supreme Court and the UNDP. In 2016, a whistleblower system was introduced to enhance transparency and accountability within the judiciary. In 2023, through the JIN ASEAN program, UNDP provided support in making the electronic-based complaint system more inclusive and provided gender-responsive complaint handling training for the personnel of the Supreme Court Supervisory Body.



Lao PDR has seen significant advancements in its legal framework, through adopting regulations that aim to strengthen the judiciary. Prohibitions against corruption are embedded in the Constitution and People's Court Law, promoting independent adjudication free from external influences. Judges must uphold fairness, honesty, and impartiality in their roles, while treating everyone equally regardless of gender, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or other factors.

Efforts are underway to align the domestic legal system with international laws and the Bangalore Principles of judicial conduct and excellence. Notable achievements include raising awareness about court excellence, implementing judge assessments, engaging court users, and utilizing digital platforms for feedback. UNDP has supported translating materials and initiatives for court excellence, integrating international frameworks and promoting integrity self-assessments. The future direction includes standardizing court user engagement, enhancing digital capabilities, and focusing on capacity building for judges and courts, in line with the Bangalore Principles.

In Malaysia, the jurisprudence has been significantly influenced by the Bangalore Principles. Notably, in 2009, a comprehensive Judges' Code of Ethics was introduced, aligning closely with the Bangalore Principles, thus supplanting the preceding 1994 version. Moreover, a structured judicial training program is in place for judges prior to or promptly after assuming office. The UNODC provides judicial conduct and training e-modules, aiding judges in effectively implementing the Bangalore Principles. The judiciary recently took disciplinary action against one of its members.

Judge Yang Arif Justice Dato' Mary Lim Thiam Suan surveyed fellow colleagues on the ground using the UNDP Judicial Integrity Checklist. The findings indicated that while 78% of the respondents are aware of the Bangalore Principles and had a clear perception of their implementation, none of the aspects of the checklist received a full score. This leaves room for improvement and will be addressed in the next induction course for the new appointments of judges.

"Independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety, equality, competence, and diligence [the Bangalore principles] - these minimal integral values are absolutely non-negotiable. The presence of these principles in any judiciary promotes public confidence in the administration of justice"

Judge Yang Arif Justice Dato' Mary Lim Thiam Suan



In Thailand, the Court of Justice has been established for over 141 years, and the Code of Judicial Conduct was adopted in 1986 and has been constantly updated. The Court of Justice is experiencing a notable increase in its case load, reaching 1.9 million cases in 2021—a 25% surge. On average, each judge handles one case per day. The Court of First Instance bears the largest workload, accounting for 95% of the cases. Two-thirds of the cases are civil, primarily involving credit card debt and loan repayment, as well as cases related to narcotics and traffic violations. The clearance rate for cases stands at 85% of the total.

Since 2021, an information center has been established to assist injured parties in criminal cases. Furthermore, a Judicial Training Institute was set up to enhance the competence of judges at all levels. The Thailand Court of Justice collaborates with various countries and organizations. Its collaboration with UNDP resulted in over 300 judges trained online in “Judicial Integrity through Digital Transformation”, the “Justice by Design” project, lectures on access to justice for vulnerable groups and a workshop on “Improving Access to Justice for Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)”. Challenges include addressing delays in case adjudication and combating misinformation and fake news.

The Supreme People Court **in Viet Nam** has accomplished noteworthy milestones, such as increased public confidence in courts, and more transparency and accessibility within the legal sector. In 2007, the Supreme Court launched a website for publishing verdicts, allowing citizens to consult them, review judges, and contribute to judges’ performance evaluations. Additionally, efforts are directed towards enhancing working conditions and welfare for court staff to improve overall justice quality.

In 2020, a virtual assistant system was introduced to provide citizens with online access to legal documents along with the publication of trial timetables, enhancing public confidence through greater transparency. The launch of online trials and easy access to case information and rulings have increased efficiency and saved costs for both the public and the judiciary.

UNDP support has played a crucial role, with initiatives such as an International Conference raising awareness about the International Framework for Court Excellence and Judicial Integrity Checklist, training on virtual court hearings and the uses of information technology for case management.

Key takeaways

- In **Indonesia**, the Code of Ethics encompasses ten values, while the Bangalore Principles – six main principles. Enforcing procedures for judicial ethics include the establishment of a Judges Honorary Panel, serving as a platform for judges' self-defense.
- In 2023, UNDP supported rendering the electronic-based complaint system in **Indonesia** more inclusive and gender-responsive and provided gender-responsive complaint handling training for the personnel of the Supreme Court Supervisory Body.
- In **Malaysia**, the Judge's Code of Ethics is closely aligned with the Bangalore Principles. In addition, UNODC provides judicial conduct and training e-modules, aiding judges in effectively implementing these principles.
- **Thailand** set up a Judicial Training Institute to enhance competence of judges at all levels.
- UNDP provided support to the **Supreme Court of Lao** in translating materials and initiatives for court excellence, integrating international frameworks and promoting integrity self-assessments to **Thailand Court of Justice** on "Judicial Integrity through Digital Transformation", the "Justice by Design" project, lectures on access to justice for vulnerable groups and a workshop on "Improving Access to Justice for Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)," and to the **Supreme People Court of Viet Nam** organizing an International Conference raising awareness about the International Framework for Court Excellence and Judicial Integrity Checklist, and providing training on virtual court hearings and the uses of information technology for case management.

II. ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN COURTS

Livestream recording available [here](#).

PANEL

- Moderator: Ms Tshering Choden, Regional Gender Specialist, Bangkok Regional Hub, UNDP
- Justice Maria Filomena D. Singh, Supreme Court of the Philippines
- Justice Sapana Pradhan Malla, Supreme Court of Nepal
- Judge Nicola Mathers, District Court, New Zealand; IAWJ
- Ms Sarah McCoubrey, JIN ASEAN Judicial Integrity Consultant

This session highlighted gender-related issues in the judiciary across three countries in the region: New Zealand, Nepal, and the Philippines, and shed light on the measures each of these countries is implementing to bring greater gender equality into courts.

New Zealand

New Zealand's judiciary grapples with a diverse linguistic landscape, with three official and 160 spoken languages, and the need to reflect its community's diversity. The presence of notable women judges in the Supreme Court signifies progress, but significant efforts are still required for comprehensive representation of the community it serves. A good starting point for spearheading equality in the justice system could be the judicial oath.

Initiatives like the Te Ao Marama (meaning the world of light) led by the Chief District Court is a response to a call for transformative change to allow all people to come to court and be seen, heard, understood and able to meaningfully participate. The Chief District Court aims to roll up this initiative to all district locations, up from the current three locations. Specific inclusivity efforts include using plain language in court, toning down formalities, incorporating customary practices and behavior and other cultural processes, improving the quality of information before the judges, inviting community and families into the courtroom, and addressing barriers to participation.



“Judicial leadership must involve collaboration with the community and other professionals. It is important to encourage equality throughout society to give our system the best chance of treating all people rightly and fairly”

Judge Nicola Mathers

They also include approaches that are unique to each community, where local courts partner with local communities to include specific customary practices and to implement best practices from the existing specialist courts.

Judge Nicola Mathers provided multiple examples of judicial leadership encouraging access to justice at specialised court level, such as Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court, Family Violence Court - improving efficiency in processing family violence cases and ensuring victims' safety by adding flexibility in the way evidence is collected, the Court of New Beginnings – addressing homelessness through a coordinated approach, the Rangatahi Court for youth. In most hearings, the judge sits at the same level as other participants and most of the hearings adapt to local customs.

In 2013, judges and speech language therapists began using existing legislation to incorporate **communication assistance** (accommodating communication difficulties, providing interpretation assistance) into criminal proceedings, with this practice currently being expanded to the Family Court. Furthermore, **solution-focused judging could ensure the rights of all participants in the judiciary system**, for example arranging an interpreter that witnesses are comfortable sharing sensitive issues with. Also, judges must be mentored about unconscious bias. The Judge concluded that mentorship and collaboration are important for encouraging right and fair treatment.

Nepal

Justice Sapana Pradhan Malla reflected on **the concept of autonomy for judges**, emphasizing the autonomy of conscience and the **importance of learning to agree to disagree**.

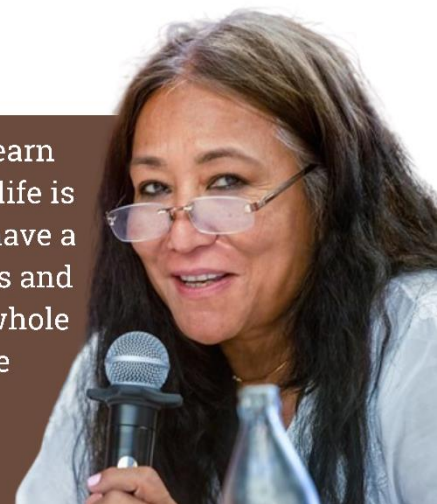
Justice brought a specific example from Nepal. Rape was a crime that received punishment of six months in prison or bail. It was preconceived that only unmarried men could commit this crime. Some raped married women filed complaints but were threatened because their rapist husbands were bailed. Since 2002, the law has evolved to punish the crime regardless of the man's marital status, despite facing strong initial criticism. **Gender injustice stereotyping is not about men and women, but the mindset**. Justice further mentioned that in Nepal, the **National Judicial Academic program institutionalized a gender justice training curriculum**.

Justice Sapana Pradhan Malla also delved into the challenges and risks associated with leadership. She shared a personal experience related to her appointment as a Justice and the questioning of her fairness and independence as a member of the Constituent Assembly. Despite facing skepticism, she stood her ground, providing compelling evidence of similar cases in the US and India, upholding high levels of integrity in front of the Parliamentary Committee.

Justice concluded that we need to learn not only about the profession, but also about life. **Judges, as human beings, need to lead fulfilling lives to effectively deliver justice.** Her last call was to stand together in difficult times.

“We (judges) need to learn the law but also learn the life. Balancing professional and personal life is critical. Judges are also human beings – we have a heart, emotions, and need to breathe. Our eyes and hearts are open – we need to strive to live a whole and happy life to deliver what needs to be delivered”

Justice Sapana Pradhan Malla



Philippines

Justice Maria Filomena D. Singh started off with a personal story of how she struggled as a woman in the judiciary. When she once approached a sitting judge, who was her idol, the latter mentioned that young women of child-bearing age should not apply for the position, as once they go on maternity leave, their workload falls on the shoulders of other judges. She had to apply eight times to be appointed as a judge. She became the most junior associate justice in the Philippines Supreme Court. Through her example she wanted to show that women need to take courage to reach the places they want.

In the Philippines, during the COVID-19 pandemic, tragically, a judge dealing with postpartum depression¹ succumbed to suicide, prompting the establishment of a hotline accessible to all employees. On the positive side, the **pandemic led to a reevaluation of work-life boundaries** and the importance of a conducive home environment for recovery.

¹ Postpartum depression is a type of depression that happens after giving birth.

In the Philippines, achieving diversity, particularly gender representation, within the judiciary is critical. The gender gap is stark across all three court levels. However, a study on gender mobility revealed promising numbers at the **trial court level, with 57% female judges**. The disparity persists in **tertiary courts, where males outnumber females**. Notably, the **Court of Tax Appeals has only one male justice**. The issue is further highlighted at the Court of Appeals, where females hesitate to apply due to potential reassignment away from their families, particularly if they start in a province. **Of 194 justices, only 18 are female**.



“Raising awareness and opening people's minds to be more sensitive to how others feel, express, and identify is the first step for us, and we are taking that step with courage and equanimity. But we know that we are not alone because there is a whole network for us to rely on”

Justice Maria Filomena D. Singh

It is mandated in the Philippines that the judiciary spends 5% of the budget on gender initiatives, pushing for gender sensitivity. Mindset shifts are necessary as some offensive behavior is still culturally acceptable. Furthermore, **establishing gender-fair language and courtroom etiquette is essential**, guiding judges to treat everyone equally, regardless of gender, disability, and other differences.

The underrepresentation of women at higher judicial levels in the Philippines is attributed to self-imposed barriers. Women often hesitate to pursue these positions due to the perceived burden of balancing family responsibilities with their professional roles. A [documentary "HerStory: A Narrative"](#) features compelling stories of eight female judges from diverse backgrounds, such as being Muslim, lesbian, having a disability, or battling cancer, who all faced gender discrimination. Remarkably, two of them managed to ascend to the Supreme Court. The video's message was that despite significant challenges, these women excelled in their judicial roles.

At the end of the session, Ms Sarah McCoubrey presented two tools developed by the UNDP JIN ASEAN Gender Working Group:

1. **[Gender Audit](#)** - a self-reflection and progress assessment tool for judges. It can be completed by judges individually. The UNDP is working on converting it into an online tool with an automatic scoring. It was designed for judges and judiciaries to reflect upon progress and to identify ways to work better together.
2. **[Self-Study Syllabus](#)** - this tool provides curated resources and links covering various aspects of gender equality and judicial integrity. It is based on research and work conducted across the region and globally. The aim is to empower individuals to drive gender equality forward in their own work.

Key takeaways

- The Chief District Court in **New Zealand** launched the Te Ao Marama initiative (meaning the world of light) to allow all people to come to court and be seen, heard, understood and able to meaningfully participate through inclusivity efforts, such as the use of plain language in court, toning down formalities, incorporating customary practices and behavior and other cultural processes, improving the quality of information before the judges, inviting community and families into the courtroom, and addressing barriers to participation.
- In most hearings in **New Zealand**, the judge sits at the same level as other participants and most of the hearings adapt to local customs.
- In **Nepal**, the National Judicial Academic program institutionalized a gender justice training curriculum.
- In **the Philippines**, the pandemic led to a reevaluation of work-life boundaries and the importance of a conducive home environment for recovery. Currently, it is mandated that the judiciary spends 5% of the budget on gender initiatives.
- In **the Philippines**, the perceived burden of balancing family responsibilities with their professional roles prevents women from pursuing higher roles in the judiciary.
- It is essential to establish gender-fair courtroom etiquette to guide judges in treating everyone equally.
- The UNDP JIN ASEAN Gender Working Group developed two tools for judges: Gender Audit and a Self-Study Syllabus.

III. EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES: HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN IMPROVE OR LIMIT ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN ASIA



Livestream recording available [here](#).

PANEL

- Moderator: Mr Nutthapon (Nut) Rathie, Head of Experimentation, Accelerator Lab – UNDP Thailand
- Judge Kraiphol Aranyarat, Court of Justice of Thailand
- Judge Yi-Yi LEE, Constitutional Court R.O.C. (Taiwan)
- Ms Ingrid Rosalie L. Gorre, Senior Advisor, E.U. Philippines Justice Sector Reform Programme
- Mr Ken Hwee Tan, Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer, Singapore Courts

This session showcased specific examples of using technology in the court system in Thailand, R.O.C. (Taiwan), Philippines, and Singapore along with its benefits and challenges for a more inclusive and efficient justice system.

THAILAND

Thailand faces two main issues related to access to justice: **socioeconomic inequality and the inability of many individuals in poor conditions to afford legal representation**. The Court of Justice aims to use technology to empower people to access their legal rights without the necessity of hiring lawyers. Nevertheless, the Court of Justice is not just building a high technology court, but more importantly a **'human touch' court**.

A considerable challenge is that **online Thai court services lack inclusivity by design**. For example, the e-filing system cannot be used by visually impaired people by themselves.

A success story involved establishing a special online dispute resolution division to address scams and disputes, providing a user-friendly platform for self-litigation without

legal jargon, witnessing a growing number of users successfully filing complaints online. The platform's success is highlighted by users sharing their positive experiences and explaining the filing procedure on social media. This initiative showcases the power of technology to address online grievances and empower individuals to seek justice independently.

Judge Kraiphol Aranyarat considers that technology can be helpful in three aspects:

- 1) technology can **empower individuals by providing information on hearing preparations and using chatbots** to answer common questions,
- 2) technology **allows people to access the court from anywhere** - web conferencing is practical to bridge geographical gaps,
- 3) technology **can simplify court procedures, making them easy to navigate** for people unfamiliar with the legal process.

However, there are risks and challenges involved. The **digital gap and literacy** pose challenges, as not everyone can afford or effectively use technology, potentially restricting access to justice. Implementing technology **must not undermine basic rights** and must comply with legal requirements. There's a **concern about losing the human element** and empathy in the justice system, potentially resulting in a 'cold' and 'low-touch' approach, particularly if technology overtakes the human aspect.

In conclusion, Judge Kraiphol Aranyarat provided three recommendations when implementing technology in court:

1. **Prioritize inclusive design**, so that every group of people could benefit from the court's services.
2. **Simplify each step of the solution**, making it accessible and understandable for the average person without requiring consultation with legal professionals.
3. **Integrate a human element** and interaction within the tech solution.



R.O.C. (Taiwan)

R.O.C. (Taiwan) opted for digitalization of some of its court activities following people's consensus in a 2016 Conference on the following: 1) call for clearer and more accessible technology, given that the complex legal language used in judgments poses a barrier to understanding, 2) responding to complaints about prolonged court procedures, aiming for more efficient proceedings.

Taiwan's court digitalization efforts focus on **integrating both digital and non-digital components, recognizing that not every aspect of court proceedings can be fully digitalized**. The intent is to leverage digital tools to optimize the judiciary's capacity and time. Some approaches include: the **use of AI for drafting judgments** to save time for judges and clerks, although it remains a controversial issue, the implementation of an **online e-case management system**, with or without e-filing, by digitizing files.

In Taiwan, nearly **100% of criminal cases are in digital form**, while less than **5% of civil cases have been digitalized**. The prominent difference between civil and criminal cases is that the former requires someone to initiate it and the defendant may still proceed on the paper process, while the beneficiary of the criminal cases is the court and once the cases are closed, almost 100% of them are digitized.

Among the challenges raised, Taiwan is not pioneering the digitalization of everything, but rather prefers to debate about it in society beforehand. A concern of digitalization is that it requires enhanced personal data protection. While technology may alleviate judges' workload, it is essential to remain mindful of the initial motivations for digitalization.

PHILIPPINES

The Philippines is a nation of over 7,000 islands with geographical barriers to access justice, a significant workload for judges, multiple languages, congested jails, lengthy trials – an issue of concern for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, court proceedings conducted in English and not in native language.

More than 70% of the population has internet and social media access, and 36% face justice-related issues, of which 74% attempt to resolve them outside the courts. The focus is on finding innovative solutions outside traditional court systems, emphasizing access to information, and addressing access to justice concerns such as lengthy trials and language barriers, particularly impacting marginalized communities. Structural issues include discrimination, inaccessibility, and a high prevalence of trafficking cases, especially affecting children.

Technological solutions implemented in the Philippines include **e-filing, e-notification, electronic raffles, online kiosks, and video conferencing technology**. These have resulted in increased efficiency, improved transparency, and enhanced accessibility for

disadvantaged individuals and those facing geographical challenges. Video conferencing technology has been particularly beneficial, allowing remote participation in court proceedings for incarcerated individuals and overseas workers. Assisted technologies have also been employed to support visually impaired individuals during exams, promoting inclusivity.

While acknowledging that not all solutions rely solely on technology, it is important to incorporate change management solutions alongside technological advancements.

SINGAPORE

In Singapore, the courts are embracing technological innovation in several ways. The courts have integrated the **national digital identity system with multi-sign digital signature into court operations**, allowing for push notifications on devices and enabling applications for substituted service. Approximately 80% of Singaporeans have the required app installed for receiving notifications.

The courts **have launched the Authentic Court Order (ACO) initiative**, providing certified true copies of court orders with a QR code. This allows easy retrieval of the exact court order and has reduced by 32% the court orders. Singapore resisted the use of blockchain technology for the ACO.

The court system has streamlined probate procedures to be completed within seven days and 18 hours, as stipulated by the statute. Additionally, for uncontested divorces, an online platform expedites the process when all parties are in full agreement.

An outcome simulator has been introduced, offering a non-binding assessment of potential liability based on information provided, aiding in managing expectations. **Algorithms are utilized to potentially register agreements as court orders** based on the data input by involved parties. For this service, Singapore is adopting some parts from New Zealand.

AI experimentation includes the use of chatbots, trained on GPT-3.5, to provide answers to general questions. However, challenges were encountered when attempting to apply this to legal contexts, especially regarding personal protection orders. Chat bots work well for general purpose questions, but for specific legal cases there is no safe legal approximation. Singapore Courts collaborate with an AI startup in the US on exploring the use of **generative text AI**. While there's promise in this technology, the associated risks need to be carefully managed. Responsibility and caution are needed when using AI-generated information.

Overall, Singapore Courts are actively leveraging technology to enhance efficiency, accessibility, and accuracy in legal processes while being cautious about the limitations and potential risks of AI applications.

Key takeaways

- Technology can empower individuals by providing information, allow court hearings from anywhere, and simplifying court procedures, making them easy to navigate for people unfamiliar with the legal process.
- **Thailand** faces two main issues related to access to justice: socioeconomic inequality and the inability of many individuals in poor conditions to afford legal representation.
- Aware that its online court services lack inclusivity by design, the **Thai court** developed a user-friendly platform for self-litigation, prioritizing human touch.
- Implementing technology must not undermine basic rights or increase the digital gap.
- The human element and interaction should be integrated into any technological solution while prioritizing inclusive design and simplifying processes.
- **Taiwan's court** digitalization efforts focus on integrating both digital and non-digital components, recognizing that not every aspect of court proceedings can be fully digitalized.
- It is essential to remain mindful of the initial motivations for digitalization and to incorporate change management solutions alongside technological advancements.
- Technological solutions implemented in **the Philippines** include e-filing, e-notification, electronic raffles, online kiosks, and video conferencing technology, which are especially beneficial to incarcerated individuals and overseas workers.
- **Singapore Courts** have integrated a national digital identity system, the Authentic Court Order (ACO) initiative, an outcome simulator, and used algorithms to register agreements as court orders. AI experimentation with chatbots rendered positive results for general purpose questions, but no safe approximation for specific legal cases.

IV. STRIKING THE BALANCE BETWEEN INDEPENDENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN JUDICIAL SYSTEMS

Livestream recording available [here](#).

PANEL

- Moderator: Ms Diana Torres, Assistant Resident Representative and Head of Governance and Participation, UNDP Viet Nam
- Dr. Noppadon Detsomboonrut, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University, Thailand
- Dr. Srirak Plipat, Asia Pacific Regional Director, World Justice Project
- Judge Filipe Cesar Marques, former President of the European Magistrates for Democracy and Liberties, Portugal

This session focused on the challenges and opportunities to improve transparency and accountability of the judicial systems and presented the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index.

The quality of justice comprises all aspects of the functioning of the justice system.

Judge Filipe Cesar Marques highlighted the vital precondition of judicial independence for effectively utilizing technology. However, **the judiciary faces a delicate balance, especially in the modern era where the internet has led to societal expectations of immediacy and efficiency.** Currently, the judiciary is perceived as slow to adapt, failing to meet these evolving expectations. It's crucial for the judiciary to evolve and align with this new demand while upholding its independence, as it is directly linked to its efficiency.

Another important point Judge Filipe Cesar Marques raised was **the populist track of the judiciary in the context of polarization of society and political deadlocks.** This polarization is transferred to court and courts unwillingly take political action in society and in return, are accused of being politicized.



There is a need for strong institutional frameworks to guarantee the independence of courts and a need to strengthen transparency and accountability. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, there is a need for Superior Council, independent bodies, administrative and budgetary autonomy, which are crucial for internal independence – not only independence from other parts of the state, but also internal. However, **the importance of the independence of the prosecution often remains neglected**. This can be witnessed in many countries with problems of not having an independent prosecution even with independent judges.

Any attempt to introduce a system of external accountability was resisted on the ground of fear that the justice system could be instrumentalized. This led to the neglect of the citizen's point of view and quality management. In 2016, the European Commission concluded that **the quality of justice comprises not only the quality of judicial decision, but also all aspects of the functioning of the justice system**.

There is a delicate balance between independence and accountability. Judge Filipe Cesar Marques provided **the example of the Netherlands of how independence and accountability could be balanced**. The Superior Council appoints a Visiting Committee, independent both externally and internally and representing various sectors of society, that every four years visits courts and conducts an independent evaluation from the point of view of the user and not just the quality of service.

Measures to strengthen the accountability of the judiciary.

Dr. Noppadon Detsomboonrut provided an academic perspective on the challenges of effective judicial independence and accountability. While most of the attention focuses on external judicial independence, there is insufficient attention at the internal judicial independence.

Dr. Noppadon Detsomboonrut shared some **measures to strengthen transparency and accountability of the judiciary**, such as public access to information – orders, judgements and the administration of the judicial organization, striking a balance between protection of administration of justice and the protection of freedom of speech, clear definition of the scope of judicial immunity, and a criminal law specifically designed for the abuse of the judicial power.

While the uses of technology, and specifically artificial intelligence, could reduce the workload burden of judges, technologies themselves can impose undue influence on judges. Dr. Noppadon Detsomboonrut suggested users and judges must be equipped with the capacity to detect undue influence.

The Rule of Law Index

Dr. Srirak Plipat presented the World Justice Project **Rule of Law Index**. It is launched annually on October 25th and assesses a country's performance based on the universal principles of the rule of law. The Index evaluates eight factors and 44 sub-factors with country profiles for 140 countries. The data indicated an **alarming decline in the rule of law globally, with erosion of checks on government powers in 58% of countries in 2021-2022. The decline of the rule of law and of fundamental rights has been accompanied by the rise of authoritarianism in many parts of the world.**

As an example, Mexico has scored well in transparency due to its strong history of participation in OGP and collaboration with independent agencies and justice institutions inside the country. However, it faces two main challenges: compromised integrity by police and local authorities and limited access to justice, particularly for minority groups. The development of the open justice metrics based on 42 variables evaluating participation, transparency and accountability involved participation of 235 institutions. The outcome was encouraging as there were strong performers and good practices to learn from.

There is weakening judicial independence in the Asia Pacific. **The three major threats to the rule of law in Asia Pacific are disinformation and fake news, access to justice to minorities, and judicial independence**, due to the rise in authoritarianism. The WJP is looking into developing a framework for measuring judicial independence in the region, and ultimately turning it into a global measuring tool.

Key takeaways

- The judiciary is under pressure to meet societal expectations of immediacy and efficiency while upholding its independence – a delicate balance to strike.
- The importance of the independence of the prosecution often remains neglected.
- The quality of justice comprises not only the quality of judicial decision, but also all aspects of the functioning of the justice system.
- While most of the attention focuses on external judicial independence, there is insufficient attention to internal judicial independence.
- While the uses of technology, and specifically artificial intelligence, could reduce the workload burden of judges, technologies themselves can impose undue influence on judges.
- The **World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index** provides country profiles for 140 countries evaluating eight factors and 44 sub-factors.
- Globally, there is an alarming decline in the rule of law, with the erosion of checks on government powers in 58% of countries in 2021-2022. The decline of the rule of law and of fundamental rights has been accompanied by the rise of authoritarianism in many parts of the world.
- The three major threats to the rule of law in Asia Pacific are disinformation, access to justice to minorities, and judicial independence.

V. CULTIVATING JUDGES' WELL-BEING, OPTIMIZING JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE

Livestream recording available [here](#).

PANEL

- Ms Tatiana Veress, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UNODC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime:
- Justice Peter Jamadar, Chairman, Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers

This session provided insights into the results of a global survey on the challenges that judges face and specific examples of mindful practices and their impact on judges' performance.

Global survey results on the biggest challenges judges face and how to address them.

The wellbeing of judges, a crucial factor in fair and unbiased decision-making, has often been overlooked, especially during the pandemic. The Bangalore Principles recognized the significance of judicial wellbeing, linking it to judicial integrity. Public trust in the judicial system may be eroded if the judge is under stress and does not take impartial decisions. In 2022, UNODC released a Global Survey Report ([Exploring the Linkages between Judicial Well-Being and Judicial Integrity](#)) that sheds light on the daily challenges faced by judges, highlighting the need for better support systems. Among **contributing factors to judges' stress are excessive workload, poor distribution of resources, ineffective case management system, lack of empathy among colleagues, criticism, and pressure from the media.**

However, there's a **lack of awareness regarding the importance of judicial wellbeing and inadequate available support, especially in rural areas.** The report emphasizes the need to acknowledge and address this issue, breaking the taboo around discussing stress in the judiciary. Judges require **access to professional psychological counseling, peer support, relevant training, and flexible working arrangements, especially post-pandemic.** Efforts like promoting mindfulness and building a supportive community among judges can be impactful without requiring significant additional resources.



The impact of mindfulness on judicial performance in the Caribbean

Justice Peter Jamadar discussed the power of mindfulness on improvement in judicial performance. He presented mindful judging as a practice of intentional awareness, arguing that **judicial wellbeing and judicial performance are in a symbiotic relationship**. Research in the Caribbean has demonstrated that mindfulness has a positive impact on judicial performance. Evidence shows that mindfulness makes for better judging, better judges, and procedural fairness. By consciously practicing mindfulness, judges not only increase their personal wellbeing but also become more attuned to the interpersonal dimension. This heightened sensitivity and humility can contribute to improvements in justice, public satisfaction, and trust in the judicial system. More information can be found on www.betteringjustice.com.

Key takeaways

- The Bangalore Principles recognized the significance of judicial wellbeing, linking it to judicial integrity.
- Excessive workload, poor distribution of resources, ineffective case management system, lack of empathy among colleagues, criticism, and pressure from the media contribute to judges' stress.
- Judicial wellbeing requires greater awareness raising, and judges need access to professional psychological counselling, peer support, relevant training, and flexible working arrangements.
- Practicing mindfulness has proven positive effects on judicial wellbeing and performance.

CLOSING OF DAY 1

The Honourable Michael Kirby AC CMG, former Justice of the High Court of Australia

In his closing remarks, Michael Kirby shared a brief history of the establishment of the Judicial Group and the development and adoption of the Bangalore Principles in 2001, which are common for both Common Law and Civil Law countries. Michael Kirby further emphasized that a very large part of the work of the Judicial Integrity Group was inspired and performed by judges and lawyers from the Asian region.

As the principles of integrity are never finally closed and need to evolve, **Michael Kirby proposed three new integrity principles to add to the six Bangalore Principles, namely the principle of courage, empathy for the disadvantaged and non-political stance principle.**

"Leadership requires courage and insight."

The Honourable Michael Kirby



VI. OPEN JUSTICE SYSTEMS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Livestream recording available [here](#).

PANEL

- Moderator: Ms Suparat Sawetamal, Thailand Institute of Justice
- Judge Kamonchanok Katinasamit (Ms), Office of the President of the Supreme Court of Thailand
- Ms Adna Karamehic-Oates, Acting Lead, Thematic Priorities | Open Government Partnership
- Aj, Pisate Virangkabutra, Head Design Instigator, Create-ture Design Studios
- Mr Alvaro Herrero, Red Internacional de Justicia Abierta (RIJA)

This session explored specific examples of open justice systems around the world, from regional initiatives to local ones, discussing open justice systems in the context of OGP, various efforts in Latin America, initiatives by the Supreme Court in Thailand and the child-friendly justice system in Phuket.

Thailand Institute of Justice's justice needs survey.

The Thailand Institute of Justice supports a people-centered approach in the reform of justice. To understand people's needs, the TIJ conducted the first Justice Needs Survey, covering more than 2000 adults. The findings revealed that **justice needs are fragmented and vary by age, gender, and area**, and that **the current justice system is costly, complicated, and confusing**.

Open justice system is a new concept, which has not been clearly defined yet. To design an open justice system, one must speculate on the trends in the world. In this context, TIJ has developed a future thinking curriculum.



Following this brief presentation, an interactive part followed, which was highly appreciated by the audience, with participants moving around the auditorium to answer the following questions:

- What are some words that come to your mind when you think of Citizen Jury and Open Government?
- Do you think a citizen jury will make the justice system more trustworthy?
- In a world where open government is at its full potential with digital technology helping automate the system, will justice be truly accessible?

In conclusion, when considering the interplay between digitization and human touch, as well as balancing quantity with quality, it is crucial to anticipate potential outcomes and identify those at risk of being left behind. The critical question remains whether an open justice system will genuinely lead us toward the desired future of accessible and equitable justice.



Open justice within the Open Government Partnership

Open Justice is a fundamental pillar for achieving a more open government. OGP places a significant focus on Open Justice as a priority area, recognizing the reciprocal relationship between open justice systems and open government. The origins of OGP lie in core values of participation, transparency, and accountability. Its structure includes a steering committee representing both government and civil society, emphasizing domestic dialogue and collaborative commitment creation, with subsequent monitoring of progress and evaluation of collaboration quality and depth.

Open Justice, as conceptualized within OGP, **entails applying principles of transparency, accountability, and public participation throughout the justice system, including law enforcement.** An open justice and open government empower citizens to defend their rights, hold the government accountable, and preserve democratic society's rights.

Several actions have been identified to foster a more open justice system within OGP, aligning with the **principles of transparency, civil participation, and public accountability.** These actions encompass making operating procedures and public officials' information clear and publicly available, implementing legal needs assessments, deploying participatory budgeting processes, and establishing mechanisms for public complaints. For example, in **Costa Rica**, the judicial observatory allows citizens to track their case, reducing delays. In **Kenya**, the judiciary works with legal aid providers for better access to justice through a collaborative process. The **UK** launched a call for evidence from citizens on how courts are working.

Challenges in achieving open justice within OGP include a lack of judiciary-led commitments related to accountability, a common hurdle in the broader context of open government initiatives. Despite these challenges, OGP continues to prioritize open justice as a vital element of their mission to enhance governance and democracy.

Thailand's Supreme Court people-centered approach to justice

In Thailand, the Supreme Court has embraced a people-centered approach to justice. In collaboration with the Thailand Institute of Justice and UNDP, the Supreme Court initiated "[Justice by Design](#)" initiative involving stakeholders in a design thinking process to create an open court system. Ten court usage points were identified, leading to the development of prototypes by various teams. Remarkably, the Supreme Court has already implemented four out of six prototypes. One key prototype aimed to streamline the online court service interface, ensuring easy transition from on site to online services. This move not only improves accessibility for those with limited digital abilities but also reduces service waiting times.

RIJA's efforts to promote justice reforms and challenges faced

The International Open Justice Network (RIJA) focuses on promoting reforms within its member states, involving judges, prosecutors, and practitioners. Their initiatives encompass collaboration with supreme courts and international organizations like OAS, OGP, UNESCAP, and UNDP BRH to design and implement reforms. RIJA's work emphasizes transparency and open data, aiming for policy reform and the establishment of open data standards for justice-related information. They plan to expand their geographical scope and drive open justice reforms in lower courts, identifying and sharing success stories.

Notable initiatives outlined in a RIJA report **include using plain language to enhance communication and access to justice, utilizing social media for court activity updates, publishing court-related statistics using free data sharing tools, sharing court personnel information, publication of data in open data standards, providing online access to hearings, and offering disaggregated gender-based data to improve justice access for women, use of data anonymization tools for publishing more information online.**

However, RIJA faces three primary challenges in their reform efforts:

- Cultural resistance within the justice system hinders transparency and reform efforts.
- Lack of technical expertise in implementing reforms across various court levels, which RIJA aims to address by providing guides and reports.
- Encouraging the judiciary to view open justice as a policy issue and allocate budget, provide training, and formulate an action plan to drive reform effectively.

Child-friendly justice system pilot in Phuket

The child-friendly justice system pilot in Phuket focuses on understanding user interactions at the provincial office of the State Attorney. **The framework for justice system innovation comprises three parts: citizens, knowledge, and the public sector, utilizing human-centered design and service design approaches.**

The pilot project began by creating a stakeholder map to identify the key individuals involved in the justice system. Numerous interviews were conducted with public sector representatives, in collaboration with For Freedom International, based in Phuket. The process involved mapping the journey of children and their guardians through the justice system, highlighting the individuals involved at each stage and the required expertise.

“People are friendly to the child, but the justice system is not child-friendly”

Aj, Pisate Virangkabutra

The primary design challenge centers on devising a method to collect information in a manner that minimizes the trauma experienced by children as they navigate the justice system. The goal is to create a system that is child-friendly, reducing the traumatic impact without introducing secondary trauma. Despite the use of digital technology, it's emphasized that **technology should only serve as a tool or touchpoint, enhancing the overall process of creating a more empathetic and supportive justice system for children.**

Questions from the audience.

What is the best way to increase public participation?

Answer. Panelists acknowledged that citizen participation is the toughest line of work in terms of open justice, due to lack of knowledge and familiarity on how to bring the citizens into the activity of the justice sector. One possible solution is to study examples from other branches of the government, considering the peculiarity of judicial activity. The judiciary should provide opportunities for public consultation and feedback on new laws and other initiatives and change its perception of an inaccessible institution. Citizen participation can help design a people-centered justice system and improve the performance of the justice system as they will be in line with people's expectations. In the Dominican Republic, for example, the development of the Judiciary's Strategic Plan was a space for citizen participation and all input was used in drafting the plan. It is important to create meaningful participation.

What are some practical examples of using simple language in court for others to replicate?

Answer. Is important to use the plain language, so that people can rely on courts. **In Thailand**, efforts are underway to simplify the court forms to enable people to at least self-litigate. However, the judges revert to the complex wording in line with the law. Nevertheless, press releases use simplified wording. **In Latin America**, studies were conducted asking people if they understood what happened in court where the language was complicated. The judges still often use Latin words. But if we want a people-centered justice system and an improved judiciary – **plain language is a low hanging fruit.**

Key takeaways

- **Thailand Institute of Justice** conducted the first Justice Needs Survey revealing that justice needs are fragmented and vary by age, gender, and area, and that the current justice system is costly, complicated, and confusing.
- When considering the interplay between digitalization and balancing quantity with quality, it is crucial to anticipate potential outcomes and identify those at risk of being left behind.
- Open justice is a fundamental pillar for achieving a more open government. It entails applying principles of transparency, accountability, and public participation throughout the justice system, including law enforcement.
- Actions like publication of clear operating procedures and public officials' information, implementation of legal needs assessments, deployment of participatory budgeting processes, and establishment of public complaint mechanisms can foster a more open justice system within **Open Government Partnership**.
- **The Supreme Court of Thailand** has embraced a people-centered approach to justice and launched with the **Thailand Institute of Justice** and UNDP "justice by design", involving stakeholders in a design thinking process to create an open court system, with subsequent implementation of pilot projects.
- **The International Open Justice Network (RIJA)** promotes justice reforms through initiatives like using plain language to enhance communication and access to justice, utilizing social media for court activity updates, publishing court-related statistics using free data sharing tools, sharing court personnel information, publication of data in open data standards, providing online access to hearings, and offering disaggregated gender-based data to improve justice access for women, use of data anonymization tools for publishing more information online.
- RIJA faces three primary challenges in their reform efforts: cultural resistance within the justice system, lack of technical expertise in implementing reforms across various court levels, and open justice not being viewed as a policy reform.
- The child-friendly justice system pilot in Phuket aims to collect information in a manner that minimizes the trauma experienced by children as they navigate the justice system.
- Technology should only serve as a tool in enhancing the overall process of creating a more empathetic and supportive justice system for children.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL ADJUDICATION: UPHOLDING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Livestream recording available [here](#).

PANEL

- Moderator: Georgina Lloyd, Regional Coordinator (Asia and the Pacific) of Environmental Law and Governance, UNEP
- Panellists: United Nations Environment Programme, Asian Development Bank, Asian Judges Network on Environment:
 - Ms Patricia Kameri-Mbote, Director, UNEP Law Division
 - Briony Eales, Law and Policy Advisor: Climate Change, Environment, and Sustainable Development, ADB
 - Mr Sean O'Connell, Global Focal Point on Environmental/Climate Justice, UNDP
 - Ms Sallie Yang, UNEP Law Division
 - Judge Angkana Sinkaseam, Supreme Court of Thailand
 - Justice Suntariya Muanpawong, Supreme Court of Thailand

This session delved into the vital role of courts in addressing climate change. It explores the judiciary's involvement in adjudicating environmental rights and responsibilities, highlighting key legal frameworks, international agreements with specific case studies. A discussion with participants followed the presentations.

UNEP Law Division's legal trainings and inforMEA

The rule of law stands as a foundational element for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Environmental rule of law emerges as a critical component, governing the link between humans and the environment. In this context, the judiciary plays two pivotal roles: 1) Guardian and Protector of the Rule of Law, and 2) Innovator for Precedents.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) collaborates with the judiciary and other stakeholders through the Montevideo Environmental Law Programme, aiming to empower member states in achieving the SDGs, a task impossible without a strong foundation in environmental rule of law. UNEP's efforts include legal training, building judicial capacity and facilitating the formation of judicial networks through the Global Judicial Institute for the Environment, specialized training programs like judicial masterclasses, publications ([Global Climate Litigation Report](#), [Environmental](#)



[Rule of Law, Environmental Courts and Tribunals](#)), and a global judicial portal.

Judicial capacity building is a priority for UNEP. In this context, UNEP provides an environmental law curriculum for judges in Asia-Pacific and has launched www.informea.org - an e-learning platform with a library of multilateral environmental treaties and over 25 introductory courses on environmental law. UNEP has developed an introductory course on environment law for Thai judges, with the first training conducted in May 2020.

ADB – what’s next for the Asian network of judges?

Ms Briony Eales stressed the importance of peer exchange in Asia and that there will be no SDGs without a strong environmental rule of law. In **2010, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) co-hosted the inaugural Asia Judges Symposium in Manila**. The event addressed challenges that remain pertinent today. During this symposium, judges advocated for the establishment of an Asia-Pacific judges network focused on environmental issues—an informal platform to enhance capacity and knowledge sharing. A consensus was reached that **building a sustained network requires both ongoing personal commitment by the judges and institutional commitment**.

Reflecting on this history, Ms Briony Eales raised important questions: **what more is needed, and how can we enhance our efforts? The objective is to better serve the Asian network of judges and other similar networks**. The momentum is favorable, but the focus should be on improving judicial education's effectiveness and expanding the network. While there are no definitive answers, fostering diversity within the network is seen to enhance judicial responses to various challenges.

UNDP establishing networks for judges

Mr Sean O’Connell started off with a few numbers to highlight the risks and impacts imposed by climate change and emphasize the role judiciary plays in environmental justice. By 2050, an estimated 1 billion people could face displacement due to climate change impact. Air pollution claims the lives of 7 million people annually. We will require 25% more resources than the Earth can sustainably provide.

Last year, UNDP released the [Environmental Justice Strategy](#), focusing on three pillars: establishing enabling legal frameworks for environmental justice, strengthening people-centered and effective institutions to deliver environmental justice and increasing access to justice and legal empowerment in environmental matters. The current programmatic support is provided to 10 countries worldwide with projects on environmental justice, half involving judiciary.

Mr Sean O'Connell highlighted the **significance of establishing networks for judges**, showcasing successful meetings in regions like Central Asia and the Western Balkans, underscoring the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing within the legal community to advance environmental justice initiatives.

The UN's acknowledgment of the human right to a healthy environment underscores the importance of approaching environmental issues through a human rights lens. There has been a notable rise in litigation, particularly in climate-related cases. The environment is moving into the world of justice, but also justice is moving into the world of environment, placing judiciary behind the steering wheel of the transition.

“The environment is moving into the world of justice, but also justice is moving into the world of environment”

Sean O'Connell, UNDP Global Focal Point on Environmental & Climate Justice



Transboundary environmental issues in ASEAN

Justice Suntariya Muanpawong insisted that environmental law should be mandatory for all the judges and that ASEAN judges need to uphold intellectual integrity.

ASEAN grapples with several environmental challenges. The Mekong River is affected by numerous dams, causing displacement and unequal water distribution. Air pollution poses health and environmental risks. Nuclear readiness, wildfires, and timber trafficking are other pressing concerns. Addressing these challenges requires regional collaboration and effective policies. Justice Suntariya Muanpawong suggested **establishing an ASEAN environmental tribunal or court for a regional approach to solutions**. Among her other recommendations is **setting up an ASEAN environmental judicial working group** and **developing more common curricula training programs**.

Environmental rules of procedure in Thailand

Judge Angkana Sinkaseam presented the environmental rules of procedure in Thailand. She discussed the Thai Court of Justice structure for environmental cases. In Thailand, there are no special environmental procedures for environment related litigation, all proceedings in both civil and criminal cases start and carry on in the same manner as other general cases. Lastly, the judge presented the Draft of Environmental Procedure Act.

An open discussion followed the presentations from panelists. The discussions touched upon the need to talk more about **climate mitigation, intergenerational equity, establishment of regional environmental courts, climate displacement and the role of courts to consider the rights of the displaced, and green justice in Asia**, which historically did not contribute significantly to climate change.

The upcoming COP28 discussions will emphasize damage mitigation and a just transition, ensuring that moving away from fossil fuels does not disproportionately impact vulnerable communities. Enhanced collaboration between industries is a positive development. It's vital for the judiciary to be well-versed in this topic and its scientific aspects and to allow people to pursue climate-related cases. Reports by UNEP on climate mitigation further support the need for action and accountability.



Key takeaways

- By 2050, an estimated one billion people could face displacement due to the impact of climate change.
- Air pollution claims the lives of seven million people annually.
- We will require 25% more resources than the Earth can sustainably provide.
- Environmental rule of law governs the link between humans and the environment, and it should be mandatory for all judges.
- UNEP prioritizes capacity building in environment law through trainings, judicial masterclasses, formation of judicial networks at the Global Judicial Institute for the Environment, and an e-learning platform www.informeia.org.
- ADB established a network of Asia-Pacific judges focused on environmental issues over a decade ago, raising the question of what else is needed to enhance these efforts and to serve judges better.
- UNDP's Environmental Justice Strategy focuses on three pillars: establishing enabling legal frameworks for environmental justice, strengthening people-centered and effective institutions to deliver environmental justice and increasing access to justice, and legal empowerment in environmental matters.
- The environment is moving into the world of justice, but also justice is moving into the world of the environment.
- In Thailand, there are no special environmental procedures for environment related litigation, all proceedings in both civil and criminal cases start and carry on in the same manner as other general cases.
- Given that environmental issues like air pollution, wildfires, water projects, timber trafficking and others are transboundary, an ASEAN environmental tribunal could be established to address these issues.

CONFERENCE CLOSING REMARKS

- Justice Pongdej Wanichkittikul, Vice President of the Court of Appeal of Thailand
- Mr Chetan Kumar, Governance and Peacebuilding Team Leader, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub

In the closing remarks, both speakers highlighted that the conference demonstrated a strong dedication to the rule of law principles, emphasizing the vital role of courts in tackling pressing concerns like climate change. The focus now is on applying the lessons and implementing the discussed principles and recommendations. Justice must adapt and evolve to effectively address the challenges of our dynamically changing world, characterized by multidimensional and prolonged crises. Preparation and multifaceted responses are crucial in navigating this turbulent environment.

LOOKING AHEAD

Moving forward, the participants emphasized the value of the JIN ASEAN network and the need for a continuous knowledge exchange. As judges everywhere are struggling with the same issues, it was suggested to **expand the JIN ASEAN network to a regional Asia-Pacific platform**, facilitating broader peer-to-peer learning and collaboration among judges internationally, with linkages to other regions as Europe and the U.S. Furthermore, **the JIN ASEAN Advisory Working Group could expand and include judges from the Gender Working Group and members of the Asian Judges Network on Environment (AJNE)**. UNDP, ADB, and UNEP are already part of AJNE and UNDP country offices could communicate and involve the judges at the national level. In addition, **social media and other online platforms could be used** by Network participants to regularly share their experiences and ideas, however at a later stage, a dedicated exchange platform would be needed.

Regarding the next JIN ASEAN events, a consensus was reached on the need to **prioritize the topic of environmental justice and the actual training of judges on executing civil cases in environmental matters**. Other suggested topics included: the rule of law for court leaders, human rights, intellectual property law, and the wellbeing of judges.

Efforts should be also made to strengthen the network by establishing a permanent secretariat, rotating chairmanship and expansion of geographical membership to Asia-Pacific.

Evolving Justice: ASEAN Judges Conference

Third Regional Meeting of
the Judicial Integrity Network
in ASEAN

5-6 October 2023
Bangkok, Thailand



"Evolving Justice: ASEAN Judges Conference"

Aligned with the principles of Sustainable Development Goal 16, the UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub's [Judicial Integrity Network in ASEAN](#), in collaboration with the Thailand Court of Justice, is bringing together esteemed judges, legal professionals, development partners and policymakers from the ASEAN region and beyond for a two-day event to exchange knowledge and discuss key topics within the justice field.

With the support of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), U.S. Department of State, the "[Evolving Justice: ASEAN Judges Conference](#)" will provide a platform for meaningful conversations and knowledge-sharing around essential themes that reflect the current dynamics of the legal field, such as judicial excellence, gender equality, emerging technologies in courts, and people-centred justice. The event seeks to explore how the judiciary in the ASEAN region can adapt and evolve in response to the dynamic changes and challenges facing the legal landscape.

Scheduled for 5-6 October 2023, the event will seek to strengthen regional judicial cooperation for a more cohesive and effective response to regional and global challenges. It will also serve as a platform for the annual meeting of the Advisory Working Group of the Judicial Integrity Network, where Supreme Court Justices from the ASEAN region will discuss future priorities for the Network and ways to ensure its impact and sustainability.

Format and objectives

The Evolving Justice: ASEAN Judges Conference will welcome over 400 in-person and online participants from ASEAN member states and internationally, including Supreme Court Justices, judges, legal practitioners, government and NGO representatives, academia, development partners and civil society organisations.

The two-day event will consist of plenary sessions, panel discussions, and interactive forums for open dialogue and exchange of perspectives among participants on various thematic areas, including:

- Lessons learned among judges and legal professionals in **improving court performance**, enhancing transparency, integrity and accountability.
- How **innovation and technologies** can be instrumental in improving access to justice, as well as the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the courts.
- What are regional and global experiences in striking a balance between **judicial independence and accountability**.
- Critical role of courts in driving **gender equality, environmental and open justice** to leave no one behind and more.

Venue and registration

The Conference will take place on 5-6 October 2023. Please [register](#) your participation to attend online or in person. If you have any questions or comments, please contact tomas.kvedaras@undp.org or stefano.pighin@undp.org and follow the conference's website for updates.

ANNEX 2. AGENDA

Day 1 – 05 October 2023	
08:30-09:00	<i>Registration</i>
09:00-09:30	<p>Welcoming remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chief Judge Paopun Chobnamtal, Deputy Secretary - General of the Office of the Judiciary of Thailand ○ Mr Gerd Trogemann, Manager: Bangkok Regional Hub Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, UNDP ○ Mr Daniel A. Lamm, Regional Law Enforcement Program Coordinator, U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)
09:30-09:40	<p>Keynote Speech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Justice Suvicha Nagavajra, Acting President of the Court of Appeal of Thailand
09:40-11:00	<p>Session 1: How judiciaries in ASEAN implement the Bangalore Principles</p> <p>The Bangalore Principles serve as a guiding framework for enhancing judicial integrity, competence, and efficiency. They emphasize principles such as impartiality, integrity, independence, and competence, with the aim of promoting fairness and public confidence in the judiciary. This session will provide an opportunity to learn from other jurisdictions how they are adopting and adapting the Bangalore Principles and how these measures have shaped their courts.</p> <p>Presentations: Judges from UNDP JIN ASEAN Advisory Working Group: Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Justice Nani Indrawati, Supreme Court of Indonesia ○ Justice Khamphay Xayasouk, Supreme People Court of Lao PDR ○ Judge Yang Arif Justice Dato' Mary Lim Thiam Suan, Federal Court of Malaysia ○ Judge Dr Kanok Jullamon, Office of the President of the Supreme Court, Thailand ○ Judge Nguyen Hoai Nam Phuong, Court of District 3 of Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam
11:00-12:00	<p>Session 2: Advancing Gender Equality in Courts: Key Outcomes and Recommendations from the Gender Working Group</p> <p>This session will focus on the critical role of courts in driving gender equality across the Asia-Pacific region. It highlights the achievements and recommendations of the JIN ASEAN Gender Working Group. Attendees will examine progress, share effective strategies, and discuss collaborative approaches for a more equitable judicial future.</p> <p>Panellists: Members of Advisory and Gender Working Groups, Judicial Integrity Network, International Association of Women Judges:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Justice Maria Filomena D. Singh, Supreme Court of the Philippines ○ Justice Sapana Pradhan Malla, Supreme Court of Nepal ○ Judge Nicola Mathers, District Court, New Zealand; IAWJ (virtually) ○ Ms Sarah McCoubrey, JIN ASEAN Judicial Integrity Consultant (virtually) <p>Moderator: Ms Tshering Choden, Regional Gender Specialist, Bangkok Regional Hub, UNDP</p>
12:00-13:30	<i>Group Photo and lunch</i>
13:30-14:30	<p>Session 3: Emerging Technologies: How Technology Can Improve or Limit Access to Justice in Asia</p> <p>Session 3 explores emerging technologies' impact on judicial excellence and access to justice in the Asian context. Delving into the potential enhancements and constraints brought by technology, this session analyses its role in both facilitating and restricting equitable legal access. Attendees will examine real-world applications, discuss challenges, and deliberate on strategies to harness technology for a more inclusive and efficient justice system.</p> <p>Panellists: Judges, Researchers and Practitioners from ASEAN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judge Kraiphol Aranyarat, Office of the President of the Supreme Court, Thailand ○ Judge Yi-Yi LEE, Constitutional Court R.O.C. (Taiwan) ○ Ms Ingrid Rosalie L. Gorre, Senior Advisor, E.U. Philippines Justice Sector Reform Programme ○ Mr Ken Hwee Tan, Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer, Singapore Courts <p>Moderator: Mr Nutthapon (Nut) Rathie, Head of Experimentation, Accelerator Lab – UNDP Thailand</p>
14:30-15:30	<p>Session 4: Striking the balance between independence and accountability within judicial systems</p> <p>This session examines the different judicial systems and will provide an opportunity for discussion on the possible challenges and solutions for safeguarding judicial independence while ensuring transparency, accountability and upholding the rule of law.</p> <p>Presentations followed by Q&A</p> <p>Panellists: Members of Academia, ASEAN/ International Judges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judge Filipe Cesar Marques, former President of the European Magistrates for Democracy and Liberties, Portugal (virtually) ○ Dr. Noppadon Detsomboonrut, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University, Thailand ○ Dr. Srirak Plipat, Asia Pacific Regional Director, World Justice Project <p>Moderator: Ms Diana Torres, Senior Governance Advisor at UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub</p>

15:30-15:45	<i>Coffee break</i>
15:45-16:45	<p>Session 5: Cultivating Judges' Well-being, Optimizing Judicial Performance: Navigating Stress, Fostering Health, and Ensuring Judicial Resilience and Excellence</p> <p>This session focuses on the well-being and performance of judges and the essential role they play in maintaining a fair and effective judicial system. We will explore strategies and practices to help judges navigate the challenges of their demanding roles, manage stress, and promote their physical and mental health, and optimize judicial performance. By fostering judicial resilience and adopting practices such as judicial mindfulness, we aim to ensure a judiciary that can better serve the principles of justice.</p> <p>Presentations: Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ms Tatiana Veress, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UNODC ○ Justice Peter Jamadar, Chairman, Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (virtually)
16:45-17:00	<p>Closing of Day 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Honourable Michael Kirby AC CMG, former Justice of the High Court of Australia
17:00-18:30	<p>Networking Reception</p> <p>Welcome Address - Chief Judge Sorawit Limparangsri, Office of the President of the Supreme Court, Thailand</p> <p>Renaud Meyer, Resident Representative to Thailand, UNDP</p>
Day 2 - 06 October 2023	
08:30-09:00	<i>Registration</i>
09:00-10:30	<p>Session 6: Open Justice systems to leave no one behind</p> <p>This session explores the transformative power of initiatives designed to enhance transparency, accountability, and civic participation within justice systems. By leveraging technology and broadening civic engagement, open justice systems seek to leave no one behind, advancing equitable access to legal processes and outcomes.</p> <p>Panellists: Thailand Institute of Justice, Open Government Partnership, Judges from the Asia-Pacific region, RIJA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judge Kamonchanok Katinasamit, Office of the President of the Supreme Court ○ Aj. Pisate Virangkabutra, Head Design Instigator, Create-ture Design Studios ○ Ms Adna Karamehic-Oates, Acting Lead, Thematic Priorities, Open Government Partnership (virtually) ○ Mr Alvaro Herrero, Red Internacional de Justicia Abierta (RIJA) (virtually)

	Moderator: Ms Fern Sawetamal, Thailand Institute of Justice
10:30-11:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:00-12:30	<p>Session 7: Environmental Adjudication: Upholding Environmental Justice</p> <p>This session delves into the vital role of courts in addressing climate change. It explores the judiciary's involvement in adjudicating environmental rights and responsibilities, highlighting key legal frameworks, international agreements, and case studies from Asia and around the world.</p> <p>Panellists: United Nations Environment Programme, Asian Development Bank, Supreme Court of Thailand, UNDP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Patricia Kameri-Mbote, Director UNEP Law Division ○ Briony Eales, Law and Policy Advisor: Climate Change, Environment, and Sustainable Development, ADB (virtually) ○ Sean O'Connell, Global Focal Point on Environmental/Climate Justice, UNDP ○ Sallie Yang, UNEP Law Division ○ Judge Angkana Sinkaseam, Supreme Court of Thailand ○ Justice Suntariya Muanpawong, Appeal Court, Region 2, Thailand (virtually) <p>Moderator: Georgina Lloyd, Regional Coordinator (Asia and the Pacific) of Environmental Law and Governance, UNEP</p>
12:30-12:40	<p>End of the Conference, Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Justice Pongdej Wanichkittikul, Acting Vice President of the Court of Appeal of Thailand ○ Mr Chetan Kumar, Governance and Peacebuilding Team Leader, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub
12:40-14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00-17:00	<p>Strategic Collaboration Workshop of the JIN ASEAN Advisory Working Group: Future priorities for the Network and ways to ensure its sustainability.</p> <p>In this interactive session, participants will engage in focused group discussions to shape the future priorities of the Network and explore strategies to ensure its enduring sustainability. Attendees will collaboratively identify themes of significance, propose research avenues for deeper exploration, and provide insights into the Network's direction.</p> <p>The workshop offers a platform for members to present updates on the Network's forthcoming initiatives within the upcoming year. This includes discussions on country-level support, exchanges on specific challenges, the rotational secretariat approach, synergies with the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (CACJ), and other partners.</p>

Background

Goal 16 of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development focuses on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and includes targets to ensure effective, accountable and transparent institutions along with access to justice for all. Further, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) binds States to take measures to strengthen integrity and prevent corruption among members of the judiciary².

The judiciaries in ASEAN have a great responsibility in driving progress towards the achievement of the sustainable development goals in the region. Judicial integrity and court excellence are a means to ensure that all citizens have equal access to transparent and effective justice. A strong and independent judiciary catalyses sustainable growth and lifts people out of poverty, contributing to fairer, just and peaceful societies.

Aligned with these global goals, and with the support of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), U.S. Department of State, the UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub convened the inception meeting of the [Judicial Integrity Network in ASEAN](#), *a Network for Judges by Judges*, in 2018. The initiative was designed to support countries in pursuing judicial reforms, focusing particularly on transparency, accountability, integrity, accessibility and court excellence. This group aims to strengthen a forum for networking, peer-to-peer exchange, and collaboration among ASEAN judges interested in exchanging knowledge and seeking solutions related to court excellence.

In 2019, the Supreme Court of Indonesia and UNDP hosted the Second Network Meeting, "[The Path towards judicial excellence](#)", where the [Judicial Integrity Self-assessment Checklist](#) developed by UNDP in consultation with the International Consortium for Court Excellence (ICCE), was presented as a tool for courts to readily identify measures for improving judicial integrity.

In 2021-2023, JIN ASEAN supported the implementation of country-specific initiatives in [Indonesia](#), [Thailand](#), [Lao PDR](#) and [Vietnam](#), gathered judiciaries for online and in-person [events](#), and published three research projects: [Gender and Judicial Excellence](#), [Emerging Technologies and Judicial Integrity](#) and [Empowering Judiciaries to Bring ROLHR Leadership to Decisions about Court Technology](#).

Documentation

[Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct](#)

[The United Nations Convention against Corruption Implementation guide and evaluative framework for article 11](#)

[UNODC Commentary on the Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct](#)

[ICCE Court Excellence Self-Assessment](#)

[UNDP Judicial Integrity Self-Assessment Checklist](#)

[UNDP Toolkit for Judges: Emerging Technologies and Judicial Integrity](#)

[UNDP Report: Emerging Technologies and Judicial Integrity in ASEAN](#)

[UNDP Issue Briefs: Gender and Judicial Excellence](#)

² Article 11 of the UNCAC: Bearing in mind the independence of the judiciary and its crucial role in combating corruption, each State Party shall, in accordance with the fundamental principles of its legal system and without prejudice to judicial independence, take measures to strengthen integrity and to prevent opportunities for corruption among members of the judiciary. Such measures may include rules with respect to the conduct of members of the judiciary.