

# **Meeting of Registrars of Final/Appellate, Regional and International Courts and Tribunals**

**Ottawa, Canada  
13 -16 April 2010**

## *Communiqué*

1. Registrars of Final/Appellate, Regional and International Courts and Tribunals met in Ottawa, from 13 to 16 April 2010. The Meeting was opened at a ceremony hosted by the Supreme Court of Canada on 13 April 2010, at which the speakers were the Right Honourable Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, Beverley McLachlin; the Registrar of the Supreme Court of Canada, Roger Bilodeau QC; and the Legal Editor of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Aldo Zammit Borda. The Meeting was formally closed on 16 April 2010 by the Director of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Akbar Khan.
2. The plenary sessions of the Meeting were held at the Supreme Court of Canada, Ottawa. Participants expressed their sincere appreciation to the Supreme Court of Canada and, in particular, to the Registrar and his team, for the hospitality accorded to them and for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting by their hosts and the Commonwealth Secretariat.
3. The Meeting included a cross-section of Registrars of Final/Appellate, Regional and International Courts and Tribunals (hereafter “Courts and Tribunals”), and was organised pursuant to paragraph 16 of the Communiqué of the Meeting of Commonwealth Law Ministers, 2008; as well as paragraph 11 of the Communiqué of the Law Ministers of Small Commonwealth Jurisdictions, 2007.

## **INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

4. The Meeting addressed the areas of organisational structure and management of Courts and Tribunals, and particularly the essential building blocks for the efficient administration of such Courts and Tribunals. The Meeting considered matters of nomenclature, qualifications and competencies of Registrars, headquarters and accommodation, security and infrastructure, recruitment, change management, as well as the representational activities and outreach of Courts and Tribunals.

## **INFORMATION AND DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT**

5. In the context of information management, the Meeting considered the areas of conducting needs assessments in the implementation of digital information systems, document security, the role of technology in filing and archiving, library services, translation, interpretation and transcription services, and matters relating to website and email hosting, management and security.

## **USERS OF COURTS AND TRIBUNALS**

6. The role of the Registry in providing support services to organs and users of Courts and Tribunals was addressed. In particular, the support and protection of witnesses and victims, including those most vulnerable such as children, was considered. The Meeting noted the primary responsibility of States in this regard. The Meeting also addressed the importance of support to the Defence and participants, as well as access to legal aid.

## **PERFORMANCE OF COURTS AND TRIBUNALS**

7. The Meeting considered the root causes of backlog as well as delay reduction strategies. The importance of clear timeframes and internal monitoring and accountability mechanisms were underscored. The areas of strengthening State support and cooperation as well as the enforcement of judgements were addressed, as were matters relating to parallel and concurrent jurisdiction, legacy, and the residual functions of Courts and Tribunals.

## **SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE COMMONWEALTH LAW BULLETIN**

8. Participants recognised the desirability of disseminating information and publishing more widely the Meeting papers as a means of promoting the sharing of legal information in the Commonwealth. They encouraged the Commonwealth Secretariat, through its Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division, to publish these papers in a Special Issue of the Commonwealth Law Bulletin and accepted to facilitate, as appropriate, such publication.

## **HANDBOOK OF BEST PRACTICES**

9. The Commonwealth Secretariat, through its Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division, was encouraged to produce a Handbook of Best Practices for Registrars of Final/Appellate, Regional and International Courts and Tribunals, as a means of assisting Registrars in the day-to-day performance of their duties, thereby contributing to improving the administration and efficiency of the Courts and Tribunals, and accepted to facilitate, as appropriate, the production of this Handbook.

## **MEETINGS OF REGISTRARS**

10. Participants acknowledged that the Meeting constituted a useful platform to consider matters related to enhancing the efficiency of Courts and Tribunals and to share best practice. They resolved to consider ways in which to organise more regular Meetings, to broaden the participation base, and to identify funding sources. Subject to the particular setup of Courts and Tribunals, the participation of court administrators may additionally be beneficial. The Meeting called on the Commonwealth Secretariat, in accordance with its mandate and resource constraints, to consider playing a facilitating role in this regard.