

**Presentation of Duarte de Athayde at the General Meeting of Toronto
on the 25th August 2007**

Dear Friends,

On my way to Toronto I had time to read some of the presentations of other candidates for First Vice President of AIJA in previous years: they unanimously stress how proud and honored they are to run for this position... I wish to say it too: I am very proud and honored to stand as a candidate for First Vice President at the 45th annual congress of AIJA in Toronto! It is quite a challenge!

When the idea to stand for First Vice President crosses your mind, the immediate reaction is of personal nature: suis je capable de le faire? Comment devrais-je réorganiser ma vie professionnelle? Est-ce que j'ai le soutien de ma famille et de mon cabinet? C'est une première barrière: sans leur soutien il est impossible d'accepter le défi.

I wish thus to start by thanking the unconditional support of my wife Cristina, and our newborn son Duarte. I also wish to thank the support of my partners of Abreu Advogados.

However, the challenge of becoming First Vice President, only really shows when you consider AIJA's needs: what does AIJA need from a Bureau at this point? What can you do for AIJA? Do you have a strategy to achieve AIJA's goals?

To determine what AIJA needs from a Bureau we need to understand what AIJA is and what it still needs to become.

AIJA is the only global association of young lawyers and corporate counsels.

The age limit is our major distinctive feature: it touches our essence. The fact that membership ends at 45 causes a constant need for membership renewal.

As a consequence, our total membership numbers are not as high as other international associations but, on the other hand, the percentage of our members that is active in the association is very high!

Our members are in for a limited period of time and they better become immediately active! And our members do answer that call!

Why? Because our members are in the strongest years of their careers; they are becoming a reference in their firms and local legal communities; they are enthusiastically active, committed and productive; they search for networking, recognition and profile; they are open to the challenges of a multinational environment and they work to find common grounds for friendship and professional collaboration; they are willing to attend our meetings and give considerable amounts of hours of work to AIJA.

AIJA is therefore a very active and productive international association of lawyers!

Ceci se traduit par exemple dans la production annuelle, à travers de plus de 20 commissions, d'abondant travail scientifique d'une extraordinaire qualité.

Ceci se manifeste aussi, à travers des relations de respect mutuel et de grand succès professionnel que nous sommes en train d'établir avec les autres grandes associations internationales d'avocats.

AIJA also is one of the oldest international associations of lawyers!

It is a rare and outstanding example of continuity, of diversity with common goals and of long lasting traditions and friendship.

Hence AIJA is about youth and renovation, but AIJA is also about maturity, continuity, and experience.

That is an outstanding combination, which renders our association really unique and rightfully entitled to a very special place in the international legal community.

AIJA needs a Bureau that will concentrate in two dimensions: tout d'abord AIJA a besoin d'un Bureau capable de consolider les travaux antérieurs et de poursuivre les projets en cours.

L'Association vient d'embaucher un directeur exécutif, Christoph Raudonnat de qui nous attendons un différent niveau d'efficacité dans l'accomplissement de nos politiques et stratégies.

L'Association a aussi signé un contrat avec un PCO afin d'améliorer l'organisation de nos congrès et autres séminaires.

Par ailleurs le Bureau a proposé des lignes directrices (Governance Guidelines) qui impliqueront la modernisation de nos statuts très prochainement.

L'Association doit continuer la révision et la mise en œuvre du plan stratégique, développant ainsi notre présence hors de l'Europe et consolidant la représentation de l'AIJA.

Le website doit encore être amélioré.

Je suis pleinement conscient de l'importance d'atteindre ces objectifs essentiels de l'AIJA.

Secondly, AIJA also needs a Bureau committed to work towards the recognition of our Association as the global voice of young lawyers.

AIJA needs to take the step of firmly assuming its rightful place as a key player in the international legal community.

This is not a new goal: it already is stated in the Strategic Plan and on the program of several presidents with whom I had the privilege of working.

And much has already been achieved in this field: we do have a human rights commission doing an outstanding work under the lead of Jean Louis Collart; we do have a future of the profession commission doing an outstanding work under the lead of Markus Zwicky; AIJA is a member of the board of ILAC (International Legal Assistance Consortium).

But we are still not taking part in the international debates on the key professional issues. Issues such as self regulation and independence of the legal profession, conflict of interest; multi disciplinary partnerships and non lawyer owned firms (and/or listed firms); status of associate lawyers and alternatives to partnership; professional secrecy/confidentiality; freedom of movement and establishment of lawyers/corporate counsels... to mention only a few.

We need to regularly produce reports or opinions on the key issues and to voice, publish and debate them in the international community.

I intend, with the consensus of the Bureau, to study the implementation of mechanisms that will permit AIJA to regularly voice its opinion on key professional issues.

The future of the profession commission, the human rights commission and the Executive Committee will have a key role to play in the achievement of these goals.

Conscious of the need for continuity and joint effort to achieve AIJA's goals, Pär and I have agreed to issue a 24 months work plan based on three pillars: the review of the statutes following the adoption of the Governance Guidelines; the review of the strategic plan (as required by the plan itself); and the establishment of a group capable of regularly voicing AIJA's opinion on key professional interest issues.

Having mentioned the above on the strategy for AIJA, let me say a word about the candidate.

Je suis un membre depuis 1992. Je commençais ma vie professionnelle quand j'ai appris l'existence de l'AIJA et j'ai été immédiatement intéressé, mais pour diverses raisons je n'ai pas pu participer aux réunions de l'Association dans les années qui suivirent. Mon premier contact avec l'association n'a eut lieu qu'en 1998, lors d'un séminaire à Estoril au Portugal.

Le Congrès de Bruxelles en 1999 se suivit et dès ce moment je ne me suis plus arrêté: j'ai participé à toutes les conférences de mai et novembre et à tous les Congrès, ainsi qu'à plusieurs séminaires.

En 1999 je suis devenu membre du comité organisateur du Congrès de Lisbonne; en 2000, à Helsinki, j'ai été élu membre du Comité Exécutif; en 2003 à nouveau élu membre du Comité Exécutif et je suis devenu Président de la Commission du droit Fiscal; en 2004 j'ai été nommé Secrétaire Général Adjoint; et en 2005 j'ai été élu Secrétaire Général.

Mon mandat se termine maintenant mais mon engagement avec l'AIJA n'a cessé de croître.

As I am stepping down from Secretary General, I would also like to say a few words about this mandate. Je ne peux pas, sous peine de faute de modestie, vous faire l'éloge du rôle de Secrétaire Général... mais je peux vous dire ceci : c'est un rôle très difficile.

Le Secrétaire Général est le gardien de l'intégrité de l'AIJA, de ses lois et traditions. Il doit défendre la légalité dans l'AIJA même si ceci cause des antagonismes dans le Bureau. Il est un instrument essentiel de continuité.

Je vous assure que je saurais respecter absolument le rôle de mon successeur.

A final word to thank from the bottom of my heart these outstanding members, with whom I had the honor and privilege to work with at the Bureau, my dear friends Marc Kerger, whom I had the honor of succeeding and who has always given me his unconditional support and help throughout my mandate, my dear friends Jan SWINNEN, Miguel de AVILLEZ PEREIRA, Frans DUYNSTEE, Nicole VAN RANST, Christian LUNDGREN and Pär REMNLID.

May AIJA be able to take the best from this outstanding combination of youth and experience!

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