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New York

The Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice Initiatives

Last year the Association formally launched the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice Initiatives. Named in honor of the Association's President from 1974-1976, the Center brings together a number of Association initiatives that grew out of its highly successful April 2000 conference, "Partnerships Across Borders: The International Crisis in Access to Justice." The Center represents a commitment by the Association to play an active and continuing role in addressing unmet legal needs globally.

As it approaches the end of its first year, the Vance Center has created partnerships with bar associations, law schools, non-governmental organizations, law firms and social justice activists in countries that have emerged from a period of authoritarian, non-democratic governments. Its programs focus on promoting access to justice, rule of law and the transformation of the legal profession.

South Africa

Although the South African political system has largely moved toward a more equitable distribution of opportunity along racial lines, the financial and legal leadership of the country continues to reflect the effects of apartheid. As a result, the ability of black lawyers and black-led law firms to obtain commercial work and to assist black business and economic development continues to be limited. It is important to a successful transformation in South Africa that black lawyers build a stronger capacity to participate meaningfully in major commercial work.

To assist in addressing this situation, the Vance Center has created the South African Visiting Lawyer Program, in which promising young lawyers from previously disadvantaged backgrounds come to New York for a year's fellowship at leading law firms and corporate law departments. The first group of seven lawyers is in the process of finishing their work and is about to return home with significantly enhanced skills. They are each committed to mentoring other young lawyers in South Africa, thus multiplying the effect of the program. The second group of four lawyers has just arrived.

Latin America

The Vance Center has played a significant role in support of a growing pro bono initiative in Latin America. It has co-sponsored conferences to promote pro bono efforts in Argentina and Chile; and established partnerships between law firms in New York and firms in Buenos Aires and Santiago to assist in the development of pro bono committees at those firms. Through an internship program, the Vance Center brings lawyers from pro bono organizations in Argentina and Chile to work with similar programs in New York City to assist in the development of pro bono clearinghouses in those countries.

Currently the Vance Center is working with partner organizations in Brazil to organize the third regional pro bono conference, to take place in December 2003. Its objectives are to encourage Brazilian lawyers to engage in pro bono activities; support structures for facilitating pro bono work, consolidate and expand the pro bono and access to justice network in Latin America, and develop a common agenda for encouraging pro bono work in the region. Ultimately the Vance Center and its Latin American partners

seek to consolidate a pro bono ethic throughout the Americas, thereby enhancing access to justice and furthering support for the rule of law.