IAWJ Congratulates Judge Navi Pillay on the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize

The International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), its Board of Directors, and Executive Office extend their warmest congratulations to **Judge Navanethem "Navi" Pillay**, a distinguished member of the IAWJ, on being awarded the **2026 Nobel Peace Prize**.

This extraordinary recognition is a moment of immense pride for our global community of women judges and a powerful affirmation of the indispensable role of women in advancing peace, justice, human rights, and reconciliation.

A trailblazer in the legal profession, Judge Pillay overcame the barriers of apartheid and gender discrimination to establish her legal practice in South Africa in 1967, becoming the first woman attorney of color to run a sole practice in KwaZulu-Natal. She subsequently became the first woman of color to serve as an acting judge of the South African High Court. Her distinguished international career includes service at the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the International Criminal Court, and as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2008 to 2014.

The IAWJ has been privileged to recognize her extraordinary contributions on two occasions: at our 2000 Biennial Conference in Buenos Aires with the **IAWJ Human Rights Award**, honoring her pioneering role in advancing international jurisprudence on sexual violence as an act of genocide, and with the **Arline Pacht Global Vision Award in 2025**, presented during our 17th Biennial Conference in Cape Town.

Judge Pillay's achievement embodies a conviction at the heart of our Association: **women judges are not only guardians of the rule of law, but also catalysts for**

peace, justice, and reconciliation. Her legacy reminds us that lasting peace cannot exist without justice, accountability, and respect for human dignity.

As we celebrate this historic recognition, the IAWJ reaffirms its commitment to empowering women judges worldwide as defenders of human rights, champions of judicial independence, and agents of lasting peace.

Congratulations, Judge Navi Pillay. Your extraordinary legacy is a source of pride and inspiration to women judges around the world.