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Press Notice

Lady Hale elected as President of the International Association of Women Judges

Lady Hale, the United Kingdom's most senior female judge and the only woman Justice of the Supreme Court, has been elected as President of the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) at its 10th Biennial International Conference in Seoul, South Korea.

The [International Association of Women Judges](#) has more than 4,000 members (men as well as women) at all judicial levels in more than 90 countries. Since forming in 1991, the IAWJ has united women judges from diverse legal and judicial systems in conferences and projects aimed at advancing human rights, eliminating discrimination on the basis of gender and making courts and justice accessible to all.

The Conference in Korea was on the theme of 'judicial challenges in a changing world'. Lady Hale took part in the session on the [challenges to judicial independence posed by global terrorism](#). She also received the banner of the IAWJ on behalf of the United Kingdom Association of Women Judges, which is to host the next world conference in London in 2012.

"It is a great honour to be elected President of the IAWJ," said Lady Hale. "The work and achievements of the Association in promoting global communication on gender issues between members of the world's judiciaries have been remarkable. Women judges are in a unique position to recognise and uphold the rights of women through the world's diverse judicial systems."

Before Korea, Lady Hale visited New Zealand, where she delivered the F.W.Guest Memorial Lecture at the University of Otago in Dunedin and the Ethel Benjamin Commemorative Address to the Otago Women Lawyers' Society. Details of these can be found on the [Speeches section](#) of The Supreme Court website.

Ethel Benjamin was New Zealand's first woman lawyer, who after graduating in 1897, is said to have been the first female lawyer to have appeared as counsel in any case in the British Empire.

Background information

Lady Hale became the United Kingdom's first woman Lord of Appeal in Ordinary in January 2004, after a distinguished career as an academic lawyer, law reformer, and judge.

She graduated from Girton College, Cambridge in 1966, taught law at Manchester University from 1966 to 1984, and also qualified as a barrister and practised for a while at the Manchester Bar. She was founding editor of the *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, and author of a number of books, including a pioneering work (with Susan Atkins) on 'Women and the Law' (published by Blackwell in 1984).

In 1984 she was the first woman to be appointed to the Law Commission, a statutory body which promotes the reform of the law. Important legislation resulting from the work of her team at the Commission includes the Children Act 1989, the Family Law Act 1996, and the Mental Capacity Act 2005. She also began sitting as an assistant recorder.

In 1994 she became a High Court judge, the first to have made her career as an academic and public servant rather than a practising barrister. In 1999 she was the second woman to be promoted to the Court of Appeal.

In 2003, together with other women judges, she was instrumental in setting up the United Kingdom Association of Women Judges, which brings together judges, both men and women, at all levels of the judiciary who are interested in legal issues affecting women and women judges.

She retains her links with the academic world as Chancellor of the University of Bristol, Visitor of Girton College, Cambridge, and Visiting Professor at Kings College London.

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