

*Only the address as delivered may be considered authentic*

**Address by Éric DUPOND-MORETTI,  
Garde des Sceaux, Minister of Justice  
delivered at:**

**The International Bar Association Annual Conference  
- Commercial Court, November 1<sup>er</sup> 2023 -  
Reception organized by the IBA Annual Conference Host Committee**

Madame President of the International Bar Association, Almudena Arpón de Mendivil, Madame and Monsieur Co-Chairs of the International Bar Association's Annual Conference Host Committee, Pascale Lagesse and Jacques Buhart Monsieur President of the Tribunal de Commerce of Paris, Paul-Louis Netter, Monsieur President of the Ordre des Avocats aux Conseils, Madame Bâtonnière of Paris, Julie Couturier, Ladies and Gentlemen Bâtonnières and Bâtonniers, Monsieur President of Paris Place de Droit, Ladies and Gentlemen of the High Judiciary, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Bar, Ladies and Gentlemen

What an honor it is to be here with you on the occasion of the International Bar Association's Annual Conference, and to share in this festive occasion organized by the Host Committee, whom I thank for their invitation.

Madame President, you represent the world's leading organization of lawyers and bar associations.

With nearly 80,000 members, including some 190 bar associations and law societies, representing over 170 countries, the International Bar Association (IBA) has progressively established itself as a truly global network of legal professionals since it was founded in 1947. From business law to the care of refugees, from the defense of human rights to cyber security, from climate change to illicit financial flows: the IBA's work covers a wide range of global issues, always making the promotion of the rule of law a central focus of its reflections.

As Minister of Justice, I am deeply convinced of the vital role played by law and justice in fostering the development of our societies and adapting to the challenges of our times.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Bar, nearly 6,000 legal professionals from all over the world have gathered in Paris this week.

Through your origins, your diversity, your practices, you represent the great international family of law.

On behalf of the French government, I welcome you all!

I want to tell you how proud France is to host your Annual Conference, which is one of the highlights of the international legal calendar.

**This year you've chosen Paris...and you've done the right thing!**

Paris is not only the capital of France, but it is also a legal capital!

Of course, Paris offers wonderful monuments, museums, parks and restaurants...

But the French capital also offers legal services thanks to the commitment of thousands of magistrates and legal professionals, perfectly trained, deeply honest and open to Europe and the world.

Of course, this evening I would like to pay particular tribute to the role played by lawyers.

Under the supervision of Madame Bâtonnière, I think I can say that the Paris Bar is one of the world's largest and oldest bar associations, with over 30,000 lawyers and a large number of practices with a strong international outlook.

Several of these firms are also members of the Host Committee behind the conference.

Today, more than 3,000 Parisian lawyers are registered with a foreign bar and practice law other than French law.

These highly specialized lawyers are able to meet the needs of international business players in specific and complex litigation.

International arbitration is a perfect illustration of this. We are proud to welcome to Paris the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce and many of the world's leading arbitration professionals.

This offer is complemented by the international chambers of the Paris Commercial Court and Court of Appeal, where highly qualified judges ensure the effectiveness of arbitration awards. French law itself has many strengths, but I'll take just one example: French contract law provides a clear framework for drafting and executing contracts and helps minimize the risks and disputes associated with commercial transactions.

Paris as a legal center thus provides access to high-quality, affordable justice, whose decisions will circulate freely in the other member states of the European Union.

But, rest assured, I'm not here to talk just about Paris. I'd like to take a few moments to tell you how, in today's world, dialogue between lawyers is more necessary than ever.

I would also like to tell you how necessary you lawyers are to our democracies. In these troubled times, whether on Europe's doorstep or in the Middle East, we must more than ever preserve the rule of law, cherish it and reaffirm its pre-eminence. And you, lawyers, are the linchpins of this rule of law.

I welcome the initiative of the Council of Europe, which is building the first legal instrument to protect the legal profession. This project will be an effective response to the growing number of incidents of harassment, threats and assaults against lawyers in several European countries.

**Because without independent lawyers, there can be no rule of law.**

Your conference is yet another opportunity to highlight both the importance of the law as a value and a regulatory tool, and the crucial role played by lawyers in its implementation.

I wish each and every one of you excellent work and an excellent evening!