



INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS DIVISION

A nonprofit organization improving justice through leadership and service to courts

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Wallace B. Jefferson
President, Conference of Chief Justices
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Chief Justice
Supreme Court of Texas
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Lilia G. Judson
President, Conference of State Court
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Executive Director
Division of State Court Administration
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Jude Del Preore
President, National Association for Court
Management
Trial Court Administrator
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Dear Chief Justice Jefferson, Ms. Judson, and Mr. Del Preore; and Colleagues in CCJ, COSCA and NACM:

I would like to take the opportunity to send a note of thanks to the NCSC Board, the Conference of Chief Justices, the Conference of State Court Administrators, the National Association for Court Management, as well as your members for the support that all of you have provided to strengthening the rule of law and building the "newborn" independent judiciary here in Kosovo. The organizational and leadership support, and the individual contributions of the many volunteers that have provided "hands on" support to Kosovo's model courts program has been invaluable. This support has been instrumental in realizing very concrete improvements in the operations of model courts specifically, and just as importantly, has helped immeasurably in reinforcing a critical change in outlook. Kosovo judicial leaders are taking ownership of the challenges they face, and initiating change.

To highlight some notable recent milestones in Kosovo's progress towards a strong, independent judiciary:

- Model courts tested a variety of "best practices" designed to improve court administration (these best practice standards were based, in large part, on the Trial Court Performance Standards and the International Framework for Court

Excellence), with support from the JSP and volunteers from your organizations. The outcomes in the model courts were widely praised in the local justice community, the donor community, as well as by the judges and staff of the model courts.

- Based on the lessons learned in model courts, the Kosovo Judicial Council adopted the “Manual on Court Management and Standard Operating Procedures,” incorporating these best practices and has initiated its implementation, with JSP support, in all Kosovo courts. The KJC has committed to update the manual regularly to add to it as more experience is gained, and to ensure that the manual is current with respect to local and international standards. The manual has received widespread praise and support as well within the justice community and the international community in Kosovo.
- The Independent Judicial and Prosecutorial Commission, charged with the “re-appointment” of persons to judicial and prosecutorial positions to ensure the professionalism and integrity of the Republic’s judges and prosecutors, completed its mandate in late October 2010. While some positions remain to be filled, the changes brought by the re-appointment process are already beginning to show benefits in terms of improved performance, case management and leadership. Judge Tim Baland of Minnesota served as chair of the Commission.
- In November 2010, the Kosovo Judicial Council adopted a three-year National Backlog Reduction Strategy, for implementation in all Kosovo courts beginning January 1, 2011. The strategy identifies nearly 100 actions to be taken by courts, the Kosovo Judicial Council, the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Justice, and the Parliament. Even at this very early stage, we are beginning to see tangible results from several courts.
- Courthouse renovation has been completed for eight model courts, and renovation work is well underway for the Mitrovica court complex and the Pristina Municipal Court. These final projects are anticipated to be completed by April 30, 2011. By the end of April, the ten renovated buildings will have been equipped with modern case intake counters, central case management offices, and 29 new courtrooms serving 17 courts. The renovation projects have been completed in on an extraordinarily short time frame (the first renovation was initiated in June, 2009).
- The Learning About Justice program has been extremely successful. The program targets primary school children, and has used a series of three coloring books to teach the children about the importance of the rule of law and the role of the judiciary. It is based on a program initiated in the 19th Circuit Court of Illinois by NACM member Bob Zastany. The coloring books were designed by a local art student and produced by JSP with USAID project funds. Crayons for the kids were provided through personal donations from your members and American citizens.

A teacher from Gillogjan Zekeria Rexha Primary School in Gjakova recently commented:

“Through the coloring books, the students were introduced to the law and our institutions, which are things that they have not seen or understood before. The books serve as an introduction and our involvement with the court has stimulated their interest. It’s been very educational. I think that getting to know the law has helped our students learn how to better respect themselves and each other, as a society and as a community, so

that we may live and work in a way that supports our new democratic state.”

As noted, these are highlights. I would encourage you and your colleagues to visit the JSP website for information regarding the development of the Kosovo judiciary:

<http://www.drejtesia-ks.org/?cid=2,1>

Finally, I have to say that the staff here at the Justice Support Program (both local staff and ex-patriate staff) are as talented and committed a group of people that I have had the privilege to work with during my career. They deserve a great deal of credit for the accomplishments here.

As you may know, USAID is in the process of completing the procurement for the successor project – known as the Effective Rule of Law Program. We are awaiting their final decision, which may come anytime now. We are all hopeful that NCSC will be given the opportunity to continue its proven work here in Kosovo. Regardless of the outcome, however, I want to reiterate the appreciation of the JSP staff here for the support of each of you and your organizations.

Sincerely,



John D. Ferry, Jr.
(jferry@ncsc-ks.org)
& the NCSC/Justice Support Program Staff

Cc: Mary McQueen
Jeff Apperson