

Press Release

Rwanda Justice Sector Inaugural Seminar for expanded use of Professional Mediation (Ubwunzi)

Kigali- January 25th 2017- Kigali International Arbitration Centre (KIAC) in partnership with African Peace Partners and Justice Sector Stakeholders launched an inaugural three-day seminar that introduced Rwandan Justice stakeholders to international best practices for conducting professional mediation. The seminar took place from 25th - 27th January, 2017 at Lemigo Hotel. Three leading American Mediators Hon. Judge Daniel Weinstein and Bruce Edwards of Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services (JAMS) and Emily Gould of African Peace Partners shared their wide experience as global mediators with Justice stakeholders and private sector and consequently informed the Rwanda mediation policy strategy development process.

The seminar was officially opened by the Chief Justice, at a session that was attended by various stakeholders from the justice sector including Professional mediators, Academicians, Lawyers, Judges. The second Day session was dedicated to Judges and Registrars while the third day was attended by Lawyers, professional Mediators, and members of the Private Sector.

Speaking about the seminar, Dr. Masengo Fidèle said, "Since we launched the Professional Mediation service in September 2014, we have not seen wider use of this service, despite the fact that we have internationally accredited professional mediators and KIAC offered the service freely. We partnered with African Peace Partners and Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services (JAMS) for an integrated approach to raise awareness on the potential of Mediation service in supporting investment while providing access to justice for all yet reducing cost of doing business for both Government and the Private Sector".

One of the speakers, Hon. Judge Daniel Weinstein said, "We were so honored and excited to share our experiences with Mediation in the US with the legal and governmental community of Rwanda. We learned a lot from them and also hope that our many successes and also our mistakes with mediation will be helpful as Rwanda explores the full potential of mediation in its culture and legal system. We had an open, spirited, and Productive exchange "

The seminar is part of a larger Capacity Building project that will support Rwanda's emergent Mediation policy. Mediation systems require the alignment of policy, procedure and training. At the end of this seminar, the justice stakeholders and private sector had a common vision on adoption and effective use of both commercial mediation and mediation of litigated matters.

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Stakeholders had the opportunity to learn about the different field of mediations; notably, commercial mediation, family mediation, employment mediation and trauma informed mediation. They also discussed the use of plea bargaining as it is practiced in many jurisdictions, including the use of restorative justice practices.

A Steering Committee comprised of key stakeholders was established to provide the oversight of the project under the coordination of Kigali International Arbitration Centre. The Steering Committee is comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Judiciary of Rwanda, the Bar Association, the Institute of Legal Practice and Development, and the University of Rwanda Centre for Conflict Management and African Peace Partners.

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