

**FIFTH REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON “REQUIREMENTS FOR AN INDEPENDENT AND EFFECTIVE JUDICIARY IN BENIN, GHANA, IVORY COAST, NIGERIA, SENEGAL AND TOGO – CURRENT PROBLEMS”**



**DAKAR, SENEGAL**

**2<sup>ND</sup> – 5<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017**

The fifth regional conference addressing requirements for an independent and effective judiciary was held in Dakar, Senegal on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> March 2017. It brought together young legal scholars, professionals and researchers to discuss and share experiences in their respective countries on the subject matter with particular emphasis on seeking solutions to the prevailing challenges. The conference, first of its kind in West Africa, focused on Benin, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.

The objective of this regional conference was to contribute towards increasing regional legal security through strengthening of the local judicial systems. Therefore, this conference provided a platform for a regional exchange among young highly qualified legal professionals and already established representatives of the respective judicial systems aimed at building and consolidating networks for successful lobby and advocacy work towards achieving independent and effective judiciaries in the aforementioned countries and the West African region in general.

The topics of discussion included civil procedure and jurisdiction; commercial jurisdiction; arbitration law; appointment, nomination and removal of judges; assignment of files at civil courts; judicial corruption; judicial system and politics; justiciability of parity; among others

In addition to the plenary discussions, the participants worked in groups on selected common issues in a bid to identify best practices in areas such as the assignment of files at civil courts, commercial jurisdiction, lawyers and corruption and detention pending trial.

As outcome of the conference, and particular the working groups, the participants noted *inter alia* the need for,

- The removal of the state's president from the process of appointment and nomination of judges to separate politics and justice,
- The generalizing of mediation and conciliation in civil cases,
- Lifelong training for judges, paralegal staff etc.,
- Transparency in judiciary, especially in appointing and nominating criminal judges,
- "Detention is the exception, freedom is the principle" as a basic principle and
- Increased punishment for corrupt legal professionals.

Working papers, articles, comments and reports regarding the results of the conference will be published in the KAS African Law Study Library later in the year.