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For Immediate Release

SOUTH AFRICAN CHAPTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES (SAC-IAWJ) HOLDS ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE DURING WOMEN'S MONTH

THE South African Chapter of the International Association of Women Judges (SAC-IAWJ) is holding its annual conference at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, in Port Elizabeth from 10 to 12 August 2012.

A total of about 150 delegates, comprising members of the SAC-IAWJ from all the provinces of the country are expected to attend the conference, which will be the largest gathering of Women Judicial Officers in the country.

The Chief Justice of the Republic of South Africa, Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng will deliver the keynote address at the start of the conference the theme of which is :
“Judicial Leadership: Striving for a Representative and Inclusive Judiciary.”

The conference will also be addressed by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development Jeff Radebe, the Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities Minister Lulu Xingwana as well as the current President of the International Association of Women Judges, Madam Justice Eusebia Munuo (Justice of the Supreme Court of Tanzania).

Other legal luminaries that will also speak during the conference are Judge President of the North West Judge Monica Leeuw (the only woman Judge President in the country), Justices of the Constitutional Court Justice Mandisa Maya and Bess Nkabinde-Mono, Judge President of the Northern Cape Judge Diale Kgomo and the Judge President of the Eastern Cape Judge Themba Sangoni.

President of the South African Chapter of the International Women Judges' Association and Judge of the Free State High Court Judge Connie Mocumie said it was befitting that the conference would be held during National Women's Month – a period set aside by the national government to focus primarily on the status of women in the country.

Speaking ahead of the conference this week Judge Connie Mocumie said that while there was no doubt that the lives of a lot of South African women had improved since 1994, they were however still faced with many challenges, particularly in relation to

development and advancement to senior positions within the judiciary, health, education, economic development and security.

“We are saddened indeed by these challenges that women in our country still have to grapple with on a daily basis. Women still don’t have access to such basic services as health care facilities; food security, education and they are still far from having economic freedom.

It is also regrettable that women and children in particular, are still vulnerable and continue to suffer immeasurable attacks at the hands of those people who are supposed to protect them,” she said.

However, Judge Mocumie added that the Chapter was committed to programmes to uplift women and commended the existence of offices such as the Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities which she said was better placed to co-ordinate the myriad efforts aimed at improving the lives of South African women.

In this regard, she said as women Judicial officers, they played a crucial role in ensuring a safer and an empowered society.

The SAC-IAWJ, like its Mother Body, the IAWJ, believes that women judges are in a unique position to advance the rights of women through the judicial system, and to protect and empower women throughout the world. Through pioneering judicial education programs and worldwide collaboration, the IAWJ and its Chapters across the world, are working to advance human rights, eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender, and make courts accessible to all.

Programmes aiming to educate and sensitise judicial officers on new crimes such as Trafficking in Persons ,drawing their attention to the subtle and underscored link between domestic violence, prostitution and trafficking in persons and the escalating rate of murder and rape can only better the judicial system and create a safer society in the long run. School and University Programmes that aim to address patriarchy in our society will go a long way to educate the younger generations to see and talk about equality between the sexes as the Constitution demands.

Issued by the SA Chapter of the International Association of Women Judges

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