

Press Release

**"Justice Kirby to attend Inauguration of Nelson Mandela Judge Praises
Jurists Role in Securing Change",**

Sydney, Monday 9 May 1994.

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JUSTICE KIRBY TO ATTEND INAUGURATION OF NELSON MANDELA

JUDGE PRAISES JURISTS' ROLE IN SECURING CHANGE

Sydney, Monday

The Chairman of the Executive Committee of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Justice Michael Kirby, will attend the inauguration of Mr Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa tomorrow.

The inauguration of the new President, who will head the Government of National Unity, will take place at the Union Buildings, Pretoria on Tuesday 10 May 1994. In his capacity of Chairman of the ICJ Executive, Justice Kirby received an invitation from the Chief Justice of South Africa (Chief Justice M M Corbett) who is Chairman of the National Inauguration Committee organising the formal change of government in South Africa.

Justice Kirby said that the decision to accept the invitation had been made by the Secretary-General of the ICJ (Mr Adama Dieng) and himself during Mr Dieng's visit to Sydney for consultations last week. He said that it was appropriate for the ICJ to be present at the changeover of administration in South Africa:

"From its origins the ICJ worked for a change in South Africa. At its own inaugural meeting in 1952 it adopted a strong commitment to combating racial discrimination. Back in 1952 that was very forward looking, and especially in relation to South Africa. The ICJ never let up in its resistance to apartheid. It sent an observer team to the mass trials at which Mr Nelson Mandela and 154 other defendants, many of them leaders of the freedom struggle were acquitted. One of the observers at that trial was Mr Edward St John QC, at the time, the Australian Representative on the ICJ. Other ICJ observers went on to high legal office, including Gerald Gardiner QC who became Lord Chancellor of England. Later in 1964 when Nelson Mandela was re-arrested, charged and convicted of treason the ICJ also observed his trial. Little could he or the other prisoners have imagined the struggle that lay ahead and the culmination symbolised by the inauguration of President Mandela.

In the many years since those trials, the ICJ has been involved in countless missions, trial observance and other activities in and out of South Africa designed to support the process of change by lawful and constitutional means.

In 1990 an ICJ mission published its report 'Signposts for Peace'. In 1992 a further mission published a report 'Voting for Peace'. These reports made important suggestions for the conduct of the free and fair elections which have now been successfully completed.

The ICJ arranged for a team of observers to be present in South Africa during April 1994 to monitor the first democratic elections. The team was headed by Mr William J Butler, President of the American Section of the ICJ and past-Chairman of the ICJ Executive Committee. The ICJ observers reported that, in their opinion, the South African elections were "substantially free and fair". Their report will be published later. It is hoped that it will contribute to the electoral process in other African countries moving towards democracy - including Malawi which has its first democratic election on 17 May 1995. With discouraging news from Rwanda and Somalia, South Africa now stands out as a beacon of good hope for Africa.

The judiciary, the rule of law and human rights will need great support in the years to come. The ICJ will continue to offer that support to South Africa as it embarks upon a major programme of legal reform and renewal", Justice Kirby said.

Apart from Justice Kirby, the other Australians who will be attending will be past Prime Ministers Malcolm Fraser and Bob Hawke. They will represent the Government and people of Australia at the inauguration.

Contacts: Justice Kirby will be departing tonight on SA 281 to Johannesburg and returning on Wednesday 11 May 1994 on SA 280. For further contact telephone his office (02) 230 8203.

ICJ EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN TO ATTEND INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT MANDELA IN PRETORIA

ROLE OF ICJ IN SOUTH AFRICAN CHANGES PRAISED

Geneva Monday

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