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EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
(VENICE COMMISSION)

in co-operation with
THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN JUDGES COMMISSION (SAJC)

SAJC / Venice Commission Workshop for Registrars

Johannesburg, South Africa
6-8 December 2007

SYNOPSIS

In co-operation with the Southern African Judges Commission, the Venice Commission organised a workshop for courts' registrars (Johannesburg, 6-8 December 2007). The SAJC unites constitutional and supreme courts from 14 countries in the region between South Africa and Uganda.

In addition to registrars from provincial high courts, the Supreme Court of Appeal and the Constitutional Court of South Africa, registrars from last instance courts from Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated in this event.

In their addresses, Chief Justice Langa from South Africa and Mr Buquicchio for the Venice Commission underlined the key role of the registrars as the backbone of the judiciary, without which justice can not be done.

In their presentations, the speakers covered the various aspects of the work of registrars, including case-flow management, court archives, legal aid, human resources and financial management, budgeting and IT matters. They also discussed the role of court researchers and their relationship with the registrars. The issue of insufficient resources was seen to be at the origin of a number of problems.

The relationship between court administrators and the registrars was discussed intensively by the participants. In some of the courts, the registrars had to report to a court manager. The participants agreed that this could entail a problem of separation of powers because of the quasi-judicial functions, which the registrars perform. They concluded that where such court managers have been established they should not be hierarchically superior to the registrars.

The registrars expressed their gratitude to the organisers for having brought them together and for having provided a forum for exchange on problems and best practices for their work. They wished to have such meetings organised on a regular basis.

The participants adopted a resolution on the topics addressed, which they will submit to the next SAJC Chief Justices meeting. They also established a steering group, which is to co-ordinate their activities and to prepare future meetings (Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa, Swaziland, the under the presidency of Zambia and the vice-Presidency of Botswana).

The programme, reports presented and the final resolution will be available on the Venice Commission's web-site for the SAJC www.Venice.CoE.int/SAJC.