



LAW SOCIETY
OF SOUTH AFRICA
PRESS RELEASE

8 August 2012: For immediate release

**LAW SOCIETY CONGRATULATES NAVI PILLAY ON EXTENSION OF HER
MANDATE AS UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

The Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) congratulates United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, on the extension of her mandate as High Commissioner for a further two years from 1 September 2012. Dr Pillay is a former South African attorney and KwaZulu-Natal High Court Judge. The extension of Dr Pillay's mandate in the position which she has held since 2008 was supported by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon earlier this year.

'During a month when we specifically acknowledge the achievements of women, it is fitting that we acknowledge the role that Dr Pillay has played in the position she has held for four years as an international human rights leader and promoter of the rights of women, particularly marginalised women in developing countries,' say LSSA Co-Chairpersons Krish Govender and Jan Stemmett.

They add: 'Dr Pillay laid the foundations for her career in human rights as a defence attorney during the struggle for liberation, and further assisted in advancing key rights for political prisoners on Robben Island.'

Dr Pillay's supportive role in the freedom struggles during the recent Arab Spring in North Africa and her resilience in dealing with difficult military and other oppressive governments, has attracted hostile reactions from such governments and their supporters.

'We support her courage and unwavering commitment to justice and peace for all people around the world,' say Mr Govender and Mr Stemmett.

We hope that Dr Pillay will work closely in relation to Central and Southern Africa with her sister from South Africa, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma of the African Union, to advance justice, peace and prosperity and specifically focus on the safety of women and children who are the victims of gender discrimination, poverty, rape and political strife.

The LSSA echoes Dr Pillay's words on International Women's Day earlier this year: 'With too few women leaders in politics, and woefully insufficient numbers of women leaders in industry, women are not taking part in decisive discussions on how to respond

to global crises. Such exclusion is at our own peril. Meaningful participation requires that women are able to access relevant information and are empowered, through education and political access, to make contributions. And by women, I am also referring to women from minority groups, poor, elderly, women with disabilities and otherwise vulnerable women. We must think about these women as legitimate rights-holders and future leaders.'

Dr Pillay practised as an attorney in Durban and was appointed an Acting High Court judge in KwaZulu-Natal during 1995, the same year she was appointed a judge on the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, where she served a total of eight years. She played a critical role in the ICTR's groundbreaking jurisprudence on rape as genocide, as well as on issues of freedom of speech and hate propaganda. In 2003, she was appointed as a judge on the International Criminal Court in The Hague, where she remained until August 2008.

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA, KRISH GOVENDER AND JAN STEMMETT

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Editor's note:

The Law Society of South Africa brings together its six constituent members – the Cape Law Society, the KwaZulu-Natal Law Society, the Law Society of the Free State, the Law Society of the Northern Provinces, the Black Lawyers Association and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers – in representing South Africa's 21 000 attorneys and 5 000 candidate attorneys.