

Report on the IMF Administrative Tribunal 30th Anniversary Conference

November 19, 2025

Closing Remarks

Speaker: Professor Edith Brown Weiss, Georgetown University Law School, former Judge of the IMFAT and former President of IDBAT, former Chair of the World Bank Inspection Panel, and former President of ASIL

Prof. Edith Brown Weiss expressed her appreciation for being honored with the opportunity to deliver the conference closing remarks. She extended her congratulations to Judge Ziadé for organizing what had been a superb event, adding her appreciation to all participants. She paid tribute to the invaluable work of Celia Goldman, the long-serving Registrar of the IMF Tribunal, emphasizing her deep institutional knowledge and role as a repository of the Tribunal's case history. Additionally, Prof. Brown Weiss conveyed regrets and warm regards on behalf of **Professor Sean Murphy**, who was unable to attend the full conference. Prof. Brown Weiss conveyed his message that, in addition to the benefit of resolving individual cases, tribunal decisions of a more general nature could have, in his view, the advantage of providing judicial guidance to international organizations. Prof. Murphy also emphasized the importance of adhering strictly to the applicable law rather than advancing policy preferences.

As her first theme, Prof. Brown Weiss highlighted the operations of international administrative tribunals, and specifically the importance of tribunal accountability.

To whom are tribunals accountable? Judges are formally accountable to the IMF's Board of Governors and Executive Directors. More broadly, there is an implicit accountability to the internal management and staff of the organization, especially regarding fairness, independence, and

integrity in operations. Judges are also accountable to each other for professional conduct and potentially to the international community, national authorities, and civil society.

Accountability consists of two main categories. The first relates to judges' personal conduct, including avoiding conflicts of interest. The IMFAT led by example in 2012 by adopting a judicial code of conduct – supplemented with subsequent amendments to its Rules of Procedure – addressing conflicts of interest. The amended Rules of Procedure provide for a three-year moratorium for matters where the judge has been involved with legal counsel or applicants. The Administrative Tribunal of the Inter-American Development Bank followed suit with a judicial conduct code emphasizing independence, impartiality, integrity, confidence, and diligence. Prof. Brown Weiss suggested that all international administrative tribunals should consider adopting a code of judicial conduct.

The second category concerns judicial opinions. Judges should be especially accountable for the decisions they write. They have a responsibility to produce carefully considered, reasoned, and fair decisions, ensuring procedural fairness, transparency, impartiality, and an opportunity for all parties to be heard.

Prof. Brown Weiss further suggested that accountability is a learning process. Management and staff must integrate lessons from tribunal decisions into institutional reforms and practices. Equally, judges must refine their approach based on accumulated experience, especially as tribunals increasingly hold hearings and encounter new challenges. Prof. Brown Weiss urged tribunals to consciously hold themselves accountable for what they do and how they do it.

Turning to broader issues arising out of today's geopolitical world, Prof. Brown Weiss noted three significant developments. First, there is an ongoing push toward consolidation of tribunals into larger ones, particularly for smaller tribunals and organizations. The idea of a global tribunal model

has also been discussed, but institutional differences necessitate tailored tribunal responses. Prof. Brown Weiss forecasted that questions surrounding consolidation and globalization will remain pivotal over the next decade.

The second development, the emergence of international administrative law as a distinct and evolving body, prompts ongoing inquiry into how it forms, how it is followed, what goes into it, and who makes decisions in relation to it. With technological advances in information management, a comprehensive, international, accessible repository of tribunal decisions could be created which would greatly benefit judges and stakeholders alike.

Prof. Brown Weiss recalled that the concept of a network of administrative tribunals was recently endorsed at the World Bank Administrative Tribunal's anniversary celebration. Such a network would facilitate regular forums for international administrative judges and registrars to share experiences informally, troubleshoot, and collaborate. These meetings could be supplemented by public presentations.

Prof. Brown Weiss continued with a speculation about a third development, the future growth of administrative law judges as a professional career cohort. Currently, some specialization exists, but will this intensify? Key questions include whether the system should exclusively favor specialists in international administrative law or maintain diversity among judges with varied backgrounds, better reflecting institutions' needs.

Turning to the questions of emerging challenges, Prof. Brown Weiss saw two main issues, starting with the decline of multilateralism and the rise of nationalism. In her view, the discussions on immunity point to an increasing threat to invoke national courts to settle disputes related to the organization's operations. The reduced funding of international institutions in turn affects the funding of international tribunals. She emphasized the importance of tribunals, management, and

staff jointly advocating for recognition of the tribunals' effectiveness, efficiency, and vital role.

The second issue had to do with artificial Intelligence (AI), which presents a significant, yet under-discussed challenge here today. While AI offers extensive benefits – enhanced research and learning, task automation, and efficiency – there are critical questions to address, such as what case data and tribunal practices feed AI systems and how AI might be used as the basis of some tribunal rulings. Variations in datasets and competing commercial AI models (e.g., Lexis Nexis' AI offerings) raise questions about consistency and reliability of AI outputs. A related question is should tribunals produce their own case summaries, as done by the IMFAT, or delegate this to AI-generated summaries?

While there are no immediate answers to these questions, Prof. Brown Weiss proposed that it may be timely to convene discussions on establishing norms, codes of good practice, or guidelines for AI use in judicial contexts, balancing institutional integrity with operational efficiency.

In concluding, Prof. Brown Weiss reaffirmed the fundamental purpose of administrative tribunals as the voice of international civil service staff, ensuring their workplace issues are heard fairly and judiciously. Acknowledging she is no longer a judge, she observed that “we owe it to ourselves” and to the staff to maintain this voice's effectiveness and adaptability—to keep pace with political, technological, and other societal changes.