

ABA President Unveils New Index to Evaluate Nations' Adherence to Rule of Law Along Four Key Principles

A new, comprehensive index that will evaluate how nations around the world are adhering to the rule of law was announced by William H. Neukom, president of the American Bar Association on Friday.

Speaking at the association's Midyear Meeting, Neukom said the index will be tested in coming months in four countries—Chile, Nigeria, India and the United States. "We're starting with four countries, but we hope to gather a lot more over time," Neukom said.

The index has been developed by the World Justice Project, a new ABA initiative that is working with other professional disciplines to advance the rule of law and justice in all nations. Neukom, former general counsel of Microsoft Corp., said advancing a sound system of justice is critical to other efforts, such as fighting hunger and illness.

At a press conference, Neukom said the index is distinctive from others in existence, because it will paint a broad portrait of how lawful and just a nation's system of government is. He said existing assessments typically focus on one point, such as a country's human rights record or level of corruption.

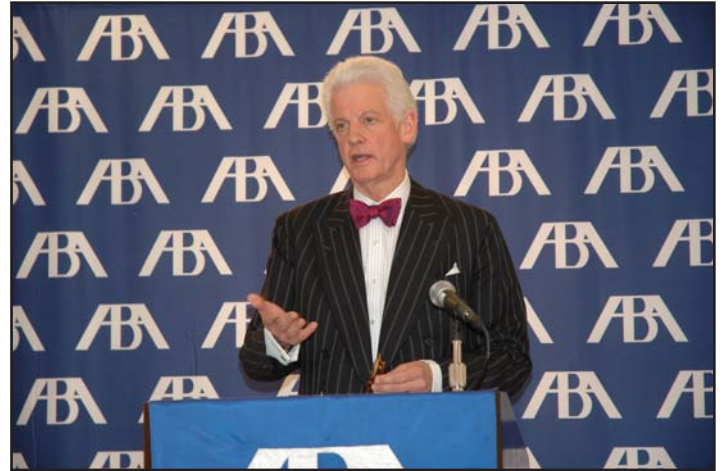
Neukom said the new index will assess four key areas: a government's leaders must be accountable to their own laws; laws must be clear, stable and protect fundamental rights; laws must be enacted and administered efficiently and fairly; and, there must be independent, competent and ethical police, lawyers and judges to enforce these laws equitably.

The index has been presented and discussed at meetings on five continents, Neukom said, adding, "These universal principles of the rule of law seem to resonate with everyone. People think this makes sense."

Neukom said the assessments would provide detailed information to governments and civil society organizations on how they can strengthen institutions of justice. "There will be no grades or numerical scorecards that can be used for shaming and blaming. We are developing facts, which will speak for themselves."

Preliminary results from the first four national assessments will be presented to an international forum on advancing the rule of law, to be held in Vienna, Austria, in July. Further information about the World Justice Project can be obtained at www.worldjusticeproject.org.

On a different subject, Neukom said the ABA would continue to press the government of Pakistan to reverse the



ABA President William H. Neukom holds news conference during Midyear Meeting in Los Angeles.

lingering effects of a Nov. 3 declaration of emergency, in which the nation's constitution was suspended, and thousands of judges, including the Supreme Court chief justice and eight justices, were arrested.

Neukom said that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's actions had "dismembered the rule of law in Pakistan. The reality is that Pakistan is more unstable and less able to deal with terrorism than it was before."

The ABA House of Delegates is scheduled on Monday to consider a resolution calling on Pakistan to restore the national constitution, as it existed before the state of emergency; reinstate all judges who were dismissed for refusing to take an oath of loyalty to Musharraf; and release all judges, lawyers and others who were arrested for opposing Musharraf's actions.

Those demands were part of an ABA petition signed by nearly 13,000 lawyers in November and December and presented to the government of Pakistan, Neukom said.

With more than 413,000 members, the American Bar Association is the largest voluntary professional membership organization in the world. As the national voice of the legal profession, the ABA works to improve the administration of justice, promotes programs that assist lawyers and judges in their work, accredits law schools, provides continuing legal education, and works to build public understanding around the world of the importance of the rule of law.