

THIRD LATIN AMERICAN CONGRESS ON RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
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Opening Ceremony Address

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Buenas dias

I have been invited to address you on the occasion of the Third Latin American Congress on Restorative Justice. I could not be more delighted to be with you, albeit virtually, for this important Congress.

I express my sincere appreciation to Dr Lamberto, Ombudsman of the Province of Santa Fe, Argentina and the President of the Caribbean and Latin American region of the International Ombudsman Institute for inviting me to address you. Dr Lamberto is an esteemed colleague and serves with me on the World Board of the International Ombudsman Institute.

I commenced my term as President of the International Ombudsman Institute on 27 May 2021, just two weeks ago, and this is my first address as the President. I could not be more delighted that my first address is to my friends and colleagues in the extraordinary countries that are, together, Latin America. In all parts of the world, Ombudsmen play many important roles, including promoting and protecting human rights, providing access to justice, encouraging good governance and contributing to the rule of law. No more is this the case than in Latin America.

This Congress features speakers of great experience and expertise to explore all aspects of restorative justice – including its theory, pedagogy and practice. The speakers are drawn from many countries in Latin America. The program you have created represents a significant collaboration of Ombudsmen, human rights defenders, scholars and other vital institutions. Your Congress, by ensuring a multi-disciplinary examination, by a wide range of institutions, drawn from many countries, is a model for all of us.

I am particularly pleased that this Congress is being undertaken. This is so because our work as Ombudsmen must be ever curious. We owe this to the Parliaments and communities we serve. How as defenders of the public, can we best serve them? What are the ways that we can most successfully provide justice? We must ask ourselves the important questions; work together to answer those questions; and use those answers to make our work even more effective. Over the next three days each of you who will participate in this Congress will advance our collective understanding of restorative justice.

Advancing our understanding of restorative justice is vital as the concept of justice is at the very core of why the Ombudsman exists. It is also a very significant reason for the widespread adoption of the institution of the Ombudsman globally.

As Ombudsmen, defenders of the public and human rights institutions, not a single day will pass without us observing the personal nature of justice - its essence lies in a very direct connection, and value, for individual citizens. We also see the social and institutional context of justice - the obvious value of achieving the most harmonious, respectful and peaceful communities, who are empowered, and unburdened of conflict and harm.

Every participant at this Congress will know the great value of understanding restorative justice and the part that it can, and does, play in our work.

I commend you for holding this Congress. I wish you every ongoing success.

Thank you.