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Citation: 18 Minn. J. Int'l L. 291 2009



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Mon Nov 2 16:23:22 2015

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Rule of Law Symposium

Foreword: Creating a Global Rule of Law Culture

Sarah Johnson Phillips, Symposium Editor

Even though the rule of law is a foundation of free, just, and prosperous societies, it is difficult to define. It is even more challenging to create in institutions, cultures, and the hearts and minds of people. On November 14, 2008, the Minnesota Journal of International Law held a symposium that gathered founders of the rule of law movement, legal scholars, judges, public lawyers, and students to explore the rule of law: its meaning and its value as a framework for international legal reform and development.

The symposium's featured panel was a historic gathering of the founders of CEELI and the American Bar Association's Rule of Law Initiative: Florida State University President Emeritus Sandy D'Alemberte, International Bar Association Executive Director Mark Ellis, Homer Moyer of Miller & Chevalier, and Law School Professor Robert Stein ('61) as moderator. The group reflected on the history, legacy, and lessons learned from CEELI (Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative), an international legal-assistance project created in the early 1990s to bring the new democracies the expertise of American lawyers. The panel also discussed the future of rule-of-law work and the potential for reviving CEELI's original "legal peace corps" model.

Minnesota is home to strong leaders in rule of law reform work, including the three judges comprising the second panel: U.S. District Court Judge John Tunheim, Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Paul H. Anderson, and Minnesota District Court Judge Kevin Burke. The panel was moderated by Law School

Professor Fred Morrison. The judges offered their perspectives and described such experiences as hosting judges from Kyrgyzstan, consulting on a new constitution in Kosovo, and conferring on the role of an independent judiciary with judges in China, India, and Egypt.

A discussion among eminent legal scholars on academic and practical applications of the rule of law, moderated by Law School Professor Oren Gross, capped the symposium. Professor Jane Stromseth of Georgetown Law Center described on-the-ground challenges in building the rule of law in post-conflict societies. Law School Professor Fionnuala Ní Aoláin discussed the importance of content in the rule of law, especially for women in transitioning societies, and Professor Stein proposed bringing the topic into law school curricula.