



PRESS RELEASE
(Immediate Release)

19TH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS MOOT COURT COMPETITION, COTONOU, BENIN

Every year the African Human Rights Moot Court Competition is organised by the Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria in partnership with another law faculty on the continent. In 2010, the competition was co-organised by the Centre and the Université d'Abomey-Calavi, Benin and was held in Cotonou from 4 to 9 October.

Fifty six universities coming from 26 countries attended this unique event on the human rights calendar in Africa. This year, there were 38 Anglophone teams, 15 Francophone teams and 3 Lusophone teams. Three universities participated in the Moot Court Competition for the very first time: University of Gambia, Christian University of Uganda and University of Parakou in Benin. Thus, students from all around the continent had the opportunity to interact with other students coming from all over Africa.

Each year, students argue a hypothetical case based on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. This year, the hypothetical case dealt with the issue of polygamy, human rights violations in initiation schools and the criminalisation of HIV/AIDS. The inclusion of the issue of HIV/AIDS has led UNAIDS to offer its support to the Centre for Human Rights. This support, which is the beginning of a long term co-operation is articulated around the specific issue of youth and HIV/AIDS.

The competition consists of preliminary rounds in English, French and Portuguese. The four best English and the two best French teams are recomposed into two teams (applicant and respondent) for the final, where they argue before prominent lawyers and international human rights experts. The following teams advanced to the final: Université d'Abomey-Calavi, Benin, University of Lagos, Nigeria and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana together argued for the applicant while Université de Cocody, Côte d'Ivoire, University of Namibia, Namibia and Rhodes University, South Africa argued together for the respondent.

The following personalities sat as judges during the final of the 19th Moot Court Competition: Advocate Robert Dossou, President of the Constitutional Court of Benin; Advocate Reine Alapini Gansou, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; Dr David Padilla, Former Assistant Executive Secretary, Inter-American Human Rights Commission; Dr Héléne Lambatim Nadjilengar, Vice President of the Economic and Social Council of Chad and President of the Chadian Women Lawyers Association; Mrs Nana-Oye Lithur, Director, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Ghana; Justice Johann van der Westhuizen, Judge of the Constitutional



Court of South Africa; and Dr Farida Mamad, Faculdade de Direito, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Moçambique.

The final took place at the *Palais des Congrès*, one of the most prestigious venues in Cotonou. The team which argued for the respondent was declared the overall winner of the 19th African Human Rights Moot Court Competition (Université de Cocody, Côte d'Ivoire, University of Namibia, Namibia and Rhodes University, South Africa).

The closing ceremony was organised just after the final round. Speakers included Dr Victor Topanou, the Academic Secretary of the Unesco Chair of the Université d'Abomey-Calavi; Dr Grunitsky Bekele, Regional Director of UNAIDS and Prof Frans Viljoen, Director of the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria. In his closing speech, Prof Viljoen congratulated and thanked the local organising team for their efforts in making the 19th Moot Court a reality in Cotonou. The efforts of the local organising team were recognised by the award of the newly established Gill Jacot Guillarmod Prize which was instituted to recognise the effort of host universities to ensure a smooth running of the competition.

The final results, top rankings and photographs of the competition are available on the official Moot Court website: www.chr.up.ac.za/moot

The 20th African Human Rights Moot Court Competition will be held at the University of Pretoria, South Africa in 2011.

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