

SUMMARY¹

OPENING COMMENTS

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Mr. Vilhena Viera highlighted that the Rule of Law nowadays appears to be a universal and well accepted concept, with 'emotional appeal'. It is common for many people (practitioners in law firms, government representatives, even activists) to laud the Rule of Law. The force and appeal of the Rule of Law, moreover, is that it acts as a rallying cry for groups of people that see the risks in the abuse of power. This also explains why vital sectors of society that are democratic often aim to foster and strengthen the Rule of Law.

However, there is a lot of debate/discussion about its meaning, and about the elements that underpin it. The transition towards democracy in Latin America during the 1980s showed that it is easier to bring down authoritarian regimes than to build strong democracies afterwards. This is in part the legacy long-standing inequalities which make it difficult to build consensus for the idea that people need to be treated equally and with respect.

Societies, the speaker contended, must be rooted in the Rule of Law. One of the objectives and challenges of the conference is to discuss how this can be achieved and more broadly how the Rule of Law can be developed.

¹ The purpose of this note is to summarise only in Portuguese or Spanish content included in the relevant video recording, and does not therefore include a full summary of the session as a whole.