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Symposium: The Global Impact and Implementation of Human Rights Norms

Foreword

Richard J. Goldstone

This publication contains the papers delivered at an unusual and imaginative symposium that successfully brought together recognized experts from different areas of the law to examine and discuss the impact of human rights norms on them. These articles reflect the diversity and richness of the proceedings. The symposium also demonstrated that in a comparatively short period of time the development of human rights norms has influenced laws and their interpretation in many fields of legal endeavor. The participants discussed areas of corporate governance, labor law, the environment, intellectual property, tort, armed conflict, and security issues. A final panel drew together many of the contributions in a discussion of whether this impact of human rights norms was leading to a great unity of the law across and within international borders or whether it was leading to the fragmentation of the law.

The continued growth of and recognition of fundamental human rights is inevitable. Human rights used to be perceived as a “Western product.” Today, however, they are becoming generally accepted as having universal application. Since the end of the Cold War, increasing numbers of nations and peoples have embraced human rights as being essential for the advancement of freedom and happiness. This is true in many of the states that used to suffer under the yoke of the Soviet Union, newly emerging states in Africa, and, most recently, the states in the Middle East that are clamoring for change and freedom and an end to despotic rule.

It was a privilege to participate in the symposium and to appreciate the depth and breadth of the influence of human rights on so many areas of the law. I congratulate Professor Linda Carter and her colleagues at the University of the Pacific, McGeorge Law School for having conceived of the symposium theme and for having brought together such an interesting group of experts to breathe life into it.

