

NEWS

Mexican first lady launches pro bono declaration

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The Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas was officially launched in Mexico City on Friday, and endorsed by the First Lady of Mexico, Margarita Zavala de Calderón.

The declaration, which has been signed by more than 300 law firms, legal departments, bar associations, judiciaries, universities, and others, was launched by prominent members of the International Bar Association on the closing day of their Conference of the Americas on 29 February.

“We live in one of the most unequal regions of the world, in which there is a great difference between those with many opportunities and those with none,” said Zavala, a lawyer who worked at corporate firms in Mexico City before becoming a politician. “We have a great opportunity to rectify this, and I am positive that this pro bono instrument is one of the instruments we attorneys have to make this situation good.”

She said her profession was “jointly and severally liable” for the “common duty” which is pro bono work, adding “I am positive these efforts will make us all better human beings”.

All signatories to the declaration have publicly committed to the values of pro bono, and - for those in law firms or departments - to a specific commitment of 20 pro bono hours per lawyer per year. [Click here to see a list of signatories.](#)

Zavala added a more personal plea to signatories to share the pro bono commitment between genders. “Women are more prone to accept pro bono work than men,” she noted, wondering why law firms could not reorganise remuneration structures to counter this. “We need to share the work between men and women – this is my special request.”

The ‘Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas’ initiative is coordinated by the Cyrus Vance Center of the New York City Bar. It promotes the concept of a lawyer’s social responsibility to help the poor and marginalised and invites the legal profession throughout the Americas to promote pro bono work as a way for lawyers to meet their social responsibility.

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