

<b>Title</b>	Report on the activities of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) (1 January – 31 December 2024)
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## Report on the activities of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) (1 January – 31 December 2024)

### I. Introduction and strategic objectives

1. The Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) is one of the two current Regional Offices (ROs) of the Permanent Bureau (PB) of the HCCH.<sup>1</sup> ROs are established to strengthen the HCCH's universality and inclusiveness and to increase the HCCH's visibility, capability, and relevance within a region.<sup>2</sup> In addition to its broad-spectrum work in Latin America and the Caribbean,<sup>3</sup> ROLAC provides substantive support to the International Family and Child Protection Law Division.
2. ROLAC's work programme is tailored to contribute to the strategic objectives of the HCCH:
  - a. promoting the universality of the Organisation by increasing awareness of the HCCH, the HCCH instruments and their benefits, as well as of private international law (PIL), among States and other stakeholders in the region;
  - b. promoting the inclusiveness of the HCCH by supporting the active involvement of States and other stakeholders in the region in its normative, post-Convention, and governance work;
  - c. assisting States in the region in the proper implementation and operation of HCCH instruments, including through the delivery of efficient, tailored post-Convention services and assistance.
3. ROLAC is headed by a Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, who is supported by a part-time Legal and Office Coordinator. Mr Ignacio Goicoechea has served as Representative of ROLAC since its establishment. Ms Florencia Castro is ROLAC's Legal and Office Coordinator and supports the Representative by performing legal and administrative tasks. In 2024, ROLAC welcomed 11 translation interns and two international relations interns.
4. The Government of Argentina continues to finance the rental and operational costs for ROLAC, while the annual travel budget for the office is covered by a voluntary contribution from the Government of the United States of America. The salaries of ROLAC's two staff members are fully covered by the Budget of the HCCH.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the ROs, please consult Annex I of the "Report on the activities of the Regional Offices for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) (1 January – 31 December 2023)", Prel. Doc. No 21 REV for CGAP 2024, available on the website of the HCCH at [www.hcch.net](http://www.hcch.net) under "Governance" then "Council on General Affairs and Policy" and "Archive (2000-2024)". For more information on the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), please consult "Report on the activities of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) (1 January – 31 December 2024)", Prel. Doc. No 18B for CGAP 2025, available on the website of the HCCH at [www.hcch.net](http://www.hcch.net) under "Governance" then "Council on General Affairs and Policy".

<sup>2</sup> See the HCCH's [Rules for the Establishment of Regional Offices](#) ("Rules"), adopted in 2020. The Rules "do not apply retrospectively to already existing Regional Offices" (see para. 2) and so do not apply to either ROAP, established in 2012, or ROLAC, established in 2005. However, para. 3(a) of the Rules provides a list of characteristic objectives and outcomes of future ROs, which is inspired by, and is reflective of, the work currently being undertaken by ROAP and ROLAC.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the specific objectives assigned to ROLAC upon its establishment, please consult the [Host Country Agreement Between the Argentine Republic and the HCCH](#).

<sup>4</sup> Financing of ROLAC differs from that of ROAP, see Prel. Doc. No 18B for CGAP 2025. From a good governance perspective, the PB considers this to be inadequate and hopes that the matter will be addressed in the near future.

## II. Work and progress in achieving the strategic objectives

### A. Promoting the universality of the HCCH by increasing awareness of the HCCH, the HCCH instruments and their benefits, as well as of PIL, among States and other stakeholders in the region

5. In 2024, four States from Latin America and the Caribbean became new Contracting Parties to one or more HCCH Conventions: Belize acceded to the 1996 Child Protection Convention, El Salvador acceded to the 1965 Service and 1996 Child Protection Conventions,<sup>5</sup> the Dominican Republic acceded to the 1965 Service and 2007 Child Support Conventions, and Paraguay ratified the 2007 Child Support Convention and the 2007 Maintenance Obligations Protocol. Throughout the year, ROLAC engaged in dialogue with multiple States on the process of joining new HCCH Conventions, providing different services depending on the level of maturity of the process: identifying priority instruments for States to consider, explaining the function and potential benefits of specific instruments, and / or offering tailored guidance on the steps required for joining and thereafter implementing the instrument. In this regard, in 2024 ROLAC held discussions with Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela, among others, in relation to various HCCH instruments. It also continued to encourage States from the region to become Members of the Organisation, as well as to provide support to States in the process of becoming Members. Among others, in 2024 ROLAC provided advice to the Bahamas, Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago on the process of becoming Members, including by meeting with key stakeholders in these States in order to encourage them, where applicable, to pass legislation to approve the Statute of the HCCH.
6. Through ROLAC, the PB continues to benefit from strong ties with intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations active in the region, valuable partners in its outreach efforts. Among these is the Organization of American States (OAS), as ROLAC's smooth working relationship with its International Law Department continues to benefit the work of the HCCH in the Americas. It is also worth noting ROLAC's cooperation with UNICEF, which, through its national offices, has been supporting the implementation of the HCCH Children's Conventions (notably in Guyana, Honduras and Paraguay), and, through its Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO), has been actively engaged in promoting them (in particular the 1996 Child Protection Convention, as a means to protect non-accompanied and migrant children, and the 1993 Adoption Convention). ROLAC also has a productive working relationship with MERCOSUR, which in 2024 provided an important platform, through various meetings and activities, for ROLAC to increase awareness of the HCCH Conventions' contribution to international legal cooperation and access to justice. Another important partner for ROLAC is the American Association of Private International Law (ASADIP), the annual conference of which took place in September 2024 in Buenos Aires (Argentina). The conference was attended by experts and stakeholders in PIL from across the region, providing an excellent platform to raise awareness of the HCCH's exploratory work on the PIL issues relating to digital tokens through the organisation of a joint HCCH-ASADIP meeting on the topic. During 2024, ROLAC also had a fruitful relation with the *Asociación Internacional de Juristas de Derecho de Familia* (AIJUDEFA), resulting in its participation in and the delivery of presentations on the 1980 Child Abduction Convention and other HCCH Conventions at the 2024 AIJUDEFA Annual Meeting and the 2024 AIJUDEFA Seminar.
7. ROLAC continues to work closely with universities and other academic institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean, which play an essential role in promoting the further development and

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<sup>5</sup> While the scope of this report is limited to 2024, it is worth noting that, shortly prior to its publication, in February 2025, El Salvador also acceded to the 2007 Child Support Convention.

increased awareness of PIL in the region. In 2024, ROLAC was invited to give presentations on the HCCH and its instruments for students and staff at different universities, such as the University of Flores (Argentina), the Austral University (Argentina), and the Faculty of Law of the University of Chile, as well as for members of bar associations in Argentina and Costa Rica and of the Cuban American Bar Association. ROLAC also participated in the XLVII Annual Seminar of the Mexican Academy of Private International and Comparative Law (AMEDIP), held in Guadalajara, Mexico. Finally, another important facet of ROLAC's efforts to increase awareness of the potential benefits of PIL, and therefore to encourage more States to join HCCH Conventions, has been its work to advocate for the further incorporation of PIL in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of progress in the advancement of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In that regard, ROLAC participated in the International Forum "Justice with a human face, a priority for the Defence of Human Rights, beyond SDG 16", organised by the Supreme Court of Costa Rica, where the Representative delivered a lecture on human rights in the context of transnational access to justice. ROLAC has also been working on the development of a judicial training on transnational access to justice in cooperation with the Supreme Court of Costa Rica, ASADIP, the University of Edinburgh (United Kingdom), the University of Antioquia (Colombia) and the *Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas* (CIDE - México). This course is expected to be offered in 2025 across 15 jurisdictions through the Network of Judicial Schools of the Central American and Caribbean Judicial Council.

## **B. Promoting the inclusiveness of the HCCH by supporting the active involvement of States and other stakeholders in the region in its normative, post-Convention, and governance work**

8. Supporting Latin America and the Caribbean's active involvement in the HCCH's ongoing normative, post-Convention, and governance work continues to be a priority for ROLAC. An essential component of this task is the follow-up work conducted to identify and update contact information of relevant actors in each jurisdiction; facilitate responses to questionnaires and invitations to meetings; and disseminate information among States that are assessing, implementing, or operating HCCH instruments, among others. A considerable part of this task is carried out through the valuable support provided by interns from the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina.
9. In terms of normative work, in 2024 ROLAC engaged with governments and other stakeholders in the region in the development and promotion of the normative work of the International Commercial, Digital, and Financial Law Division of the HCCH (in particular in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and El Salvador). To this end, it identified prospective experts from the region for participation in the Experts' Group on Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) and in the Digital Tokens Project. ROLAC also, together with ASADIP, developed and distributed a survey to National Organs and academics of Latin American States in order to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the existing regulations and / or case law on digital tokens, as well as to compile suggestions from subject-matter experts that may contribute to the future development of the Digital Tokens Project.
10. In terms of post-Convention work, ROLAC supported the Transnational Litigation and Apostille Division with the preparations for the July 2024 meeting of the Special Commission (SC) on the Practical Operation of the 1965 Service, 1970 Evidence, and 1980 Access to Justice Conventions. Among other activities, ROLAC facilitated the submission of responses to questionnaires and comments to the updated versions of the Service and Evidence Handbooks; contacted the Central or Competent Authorities of Contracting Parties to these Conventions; provided assistance upon request to participants from the region; and created a WhatsApp group to help Central Authorities (CAs) from the region to stay in touch and coordinate their positions efficiently both before and during the SC meeting. ROLAC also assisted with the organisation of the 13<sup>th</sup> International Forum

on the electronic Apostille Programme (e-APP),<sup>6</sup> encouraging the participation of Central Authorities and panellists from Latin America and the Caribbean.

11. Finally, in terms of governance work, ROLAC has actively supported the process of implementation of Spanish as an official language of the HCCH.<sup>7</sup> As part of this work, ROLAC has been involved in the translation of key publications and documents produced by the HCCH, including through the work of translation interns from Belgrano University of Argentina; it has continued to coordinate the expansion of the International Child Abduction Database (INCADAT)'s Spanish-language content; and it has continued to disseminate HCCH documents in Spanish among stakeholders in the region. ROLAC also continues to assist States from the region, including States which have recently become HCCH Members, to ensure the proper functioning of their National Organs by, among others, providing advice and information and arranging meetings with other National Organs. As part of this work, ROLAC assisted the Governments of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Honduras.
12. Notably, in November 2024, ROLAC organised a two-day study visit for officials of the Legal Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, during which it provided technical assistance on the functions that the Legal Directorate must perform in its role as National Organ for the HCCH and as Central Authority for the 1965 Service and 1970 Evidence Conventions. ROLAC organised a programme of activities that included meetings with the National Organs of Mexico and the United States of America, as well as with the Central Authorities of Argentina and Brazil, and assisted with the development of internal guidelines for the operation of the National Organ. These efforts led the National Organ to establish the PIL Ad-Hoc Expert Group, an advisory body which will assist the National Organ in carrying out its work related to the HCCH and other PIL forums. The group will also play a key role in contributing to the promotion, dissemination, and development of PIL in Costa Rica. Later in the year, the National Organ organised an event on "Challenges and Opportunities for the development of PIL in Costa Rica", featuring the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the ROLAC Representative as speakers, among others. The event aimed to highlight the importance of PIL, the work of the HCCH, and the role of the National Organ as a coordinator of PIL at both the national and regional levels. ROLAC hopes to replicate this experience with other National Organs in the region which have already expressed an interest in receiving assistance to strengthen the development of PIL and their engagement in the work of the HCCH.
13. As in previous years, in early 2024 ROLAC organised a meeting of Latin American National Organs and a meeting of Latin American PIL associations to exchange views in preparation for the 2024 meeting of CGAP. This practice has proven beneficial to strengthening the region's contribution to CGAP's discussions, and thus will be repeated in early 2025 in preparation for CGAP's 2025 meeting. Likewise, ROLAC has continued to promote coordinated efforts between National Organs and the academic sector in the region, encouraging the establishment of academic associations for PIL in States which do not yet have them. Additionally, it has fostered collaboration among existing associations across the region. This coordinated work model has proven to be valuable for the National Organs of States that have already implemented it, as it allows them to benefit from the informed and qualified opinions of experts on various matters of interest to both the HCCH and other international organisations.

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<sup>6</sup> The 13th e-APP was held in Astana, Kazakhstan on 21 and 22 October 2024. See, for further information, the HCCH website at [www.hcch.net](http://www.hcch.net) under "Apostille" then "e-APP Forum".

<sup>7</sup> Spanish became an official working language of the HCCH on 1 July 2024.

### **C. Assisting States in the region in the proper implementation and operation of HCCH instruments, including through the delivery of efficient, tailored post-Convention services and assistance**

14. During 2024, ROLAC continued to participate in the organisation of trainings (both remotely and in person) and to field multiple requests and enquiries from officials and members of the International Hague Network of Judges (IHNJ) from States both within and outside the region. This has facilitated the identification of challenges and good practices in the implementation and operation of HCCH Conventions and instruments, their promotion among relevant actors, and the delivery of post-Convention services and assistance. Particular attention has been devoted to States which are in the process of assessing and / or implementing more than one instrument at a time, such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, and Trinidad and Tobago.
15. As part of this work, ROLAC organised various trainings aimed at assisting States in the region in the proper implementation and operation of HCCH instruments, and contributed to various seminars and trainings organised by partner organisations. This included the organisation of three trainings on the 1980 Child Abduction Convention, a training on mediation in child abduction cases, and four trainings on the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions.
16. In addition to the organisation of trainings, ROLAC was also in regular contact with Central Authorities from across the region and beyond to discuss the implementation and operation of the HCCH Conventions and instruments. This included holding meetings and exchanges with around 20 Central Authorities from Latin America and the Caribbean on the 1980 Child Abduction Convention, as well as with several Central Authorities from outside the region to discuss cross-regional issues relating to the implementation and operation of the 1980 Child Abduction and 1993 Adoption Conventions. ROLAC also assisted States in the revision of draft legislation and regulations to facilitate the effective implementation and operation of HCCH Conventions.
17. INCADAT has been an essential tool for increasing the visibility of case law from Latin American and Caribbean States, allowing judges to enhance the quality of their decisions and legal professionals to better represent and advise their clients. The expansion of Latin American jurisprudence in INCADAT continued throughout 2024, in great part due to the support provided to ROLAC by a team of PIL professors, young lawyers, and law students coordinated by Professor Nieve Rubaja of the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina). ROLAC would like to formally recognise and express its deepest gratitude to Professor Rubaja for her invaluable contribution to the expansion of INCADAT over the past 13 years.
18. Finally, ROLAC continued supporting IHNJ members from the region, including by promoting the prioritisation of international child abduction cases within the judicial administrative systems and assisting with the organisation of national trainings and regional meetings, including the First Regional Meeting of Judges of the IHNJ from Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>8</sup>

### **III. Key upcoming projects and initiatives**

19. In addition to its regular support of the work of the PB across all its divisions, ROLAC intends to undertake the following specific activities in 2025:
  - a. assisting States that have recently joined the 1996 Child Protection and 2007 Child Support Conventions with the implementation and operation of both Conventions, including through the possible organisation of a regional meeting of Central Authorities for one or both Conventions;

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<sup>8</sup> This meeting was held from 14 to 17 May 2024 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

- b. supporting the organisation of the conference “15 years of the HCCH Washington Declaration: Progress and perspectives on international family relocation”, which will be held in Washington, DC from 2 to 4 April 2025, and of the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Meeting of the IHNJ, taking place in Singapore from 19 to 21 May 2025;
- c. assisting Caribbean jurisdictions in optimising the operation of the 1980 Child Abduction Convention (including by possibly encouraging acceptances of their accessions), and in assessing the possibility of implementing one or both e-APP components to enhance the operation of the 1961 Apostille Convention;
- d. the possible organisation of an event on Transnational Access to Justice involving several core HCCH Conventions across divisions, in partnership with the Central American and Caribbean Judicial Council;
- e. launching the first cycle of the Virtual Course on Transnational Access to Justice (again involving several core HCCH Conventions across divisions) developed in cooperation with the Supreme Court of Costa Rica, ASADIP, the University of Edinburgh (UK), the University of Antioquia (Colombia) and the *Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas* (CIDE – México);
- f. organisation of regional meetings: (i) for National Organs, and (ii) for Central Authorities under the 1980 Child Abduction, 1996 Child Protection, 2007 Child Support, 1965 Service, and 1970 Evidence Conventions.

#### IV. Proposal for CGAP

20. The PB proposes the following Conclusions and Decisions, covering both ROs, for CGAP’s consideration:

CGAP welcomed the reports of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), and recognised the services they continue to provide to HCCH Members. CGAP further:

- a. encouraged Members to offer concrete support towards the implementation of the activities and objectives of the ROs, including in the form of voluntary contributions, secondments, information, translations, and networking;
- b. invited States from the relevant regions that are currently considering the possibility of joining one or more HCCH Conventions, or of becoming HCCH Members, to contact their respective RO;
- c. invited National Organs, Central Authorities, and Competent Authorities to contact their relevant RO, where experience sharing with authorities of other Contracting Parties, or the academic sector, would be helpful to the effective implementation and operation of HCCH Conventions;
- d. invited States to facilitate, to the extent possible, the participation of their respective IHNJ members in the 4<sup>th</sup> Global meeting of the IHNJ and HCCH Judicial Roundtable which will take place in Singapore in 2025.