

4th Global meeting of the IHNJ and HCCH Judicial Roundtable

Singapore, 19-22 May 2025

Conclusions & Recommendations (C&R)

- 1 From 19 to 21 May 2025, the Fourth Global Meeting of the International Hague Network of Judges (IHNJ) was held in Singapore, co-hosted by the Singapore Family Justice Courts and the HCCH. It was attended by over 50 judges representing 34 HCCH Members. The Permanent Bureau of the HCCH is grateful to the Singapore Family Justice Courts for its hospitality and generous support of the Fourth Global Meeting of the IHNJ.
- 2 During the 4th Global Meeting, members of the IHNJ adopted the following C&R:

I. Taking stock: significant International Hague Network of Judges (IHNJ) developments since the 2018 IHNJ Global Meeting

- 3 Participants warmly welcomed the new members of the IHNJ and the steady, organic growth of the IHNJ over the years, which now includes 161 judges representing 89 States across all continents.
- 4 IHNJ members are encouraged to raise awareness of the benefits of membership to the IHNJ in respect of States that have not yet designated judges to the IHNJ. The Permanent Bureau will then consider inviting these States to designate judges to the IHNJ.
- 5 Members of the IHNJ reported on the wide range of activities and initiatives in which they had participated and on the significant recent developments in their respective jurisdictions and / or regions, which included several legislative / procedural initiatives to:
 - expedite procedures;
 - reduce delays;
 - promote mediation and other types of alternative dispute resolution;
 - enhance access to justice;
 - facilitate the hearing of the child's voice in proceedings; and
 - integrate the role and status of the IHNJ Member and direct judicial communications within their national system.
- 6 The Permanent Bureau reported on its recent activities and on the progress achieved across several projects pertaining to the 1980 and 1996 Conventions.

II. State of play of the IHNJ – Present and future perspectives

- 7 IHNJ members discussed the current structure of the IHNJ and agreed that it is fit for purpose.
- 8 IHNJ members noted that being part of more than one judicial network positively supports international judicial cooperation.

III. State of play of the IHNJ – Increased activities & support

- 9 IHNJ members underlined that IHNJ meetings (Global and Regional) and, particularly, in person IHNJ meetings are essential in supporting and developing the work of the IHNJ.
- 10 Recalling paragraph 1.6 of the [Emerging Guidance and General Principles for Direct Judicial Communications \(DJC\)](#), IHNJ members reiterated the merits of judges being designated for as long as possible, in order to enhance the efficacy of their role and of the IHNJ.
- 11 In order to assist with the integration of new members to the IHNJ, it was suggested that all IHNJ members should provide a photograph and short biography, to be included in a document / directory of all IHNJ members on the IHNJ Secure Platform. IHNJ members agreed that it is important to promote their work, along with the HCCH Family and Child Protection Conventions and the IHNJ itself, within their jurisdiction.
- 12 IHNJ members supported the mentoring of newly designated judges to the network, either by offering to do so and / or at their request.

IV. State of play of the IHNJ at the domestic level – Scope of action of members of the IHNJ

- 13 IHNJ members recalled their commitment to the promotion of the IHNJ and direct judicial communications by raising awareness among judges to the application of international instruments and good practices through trainings and the dissemination of information.
- 14 IHNJ members discussed that, where appropriate, it is desirable to develop national judicial networks that are specialised in private international family law matters. To this end, IHNJ members discussed the possibility of developing some guidelines to enable transparent and effective communications between the IHNJ members and their domestic judicial authorities.
- 15 It was suggested that, where members of the IHNJ face challenges within their own jurisdictions, for example with the expeditious resolution of cases under the 1980 Convention, consideration may be given to establishing Working Groups, either at the IHNJ level or the national level, to resolve those challenges.
- 16 IHNJ members emphasised the importance of having an effective working relationship with their Central Authorities.
- 17 IHNJ members highlighted that engaging with legal professionals and other stakeholders involved in international family cases within their jurisdictions can be helpful to assess and review, where appropriate, domestic rules and procedures.

V. Promotion of the IHNJ and DJC

- 18 Recalling C&R Nos 8 and 9 of the [1st Global Meeting of the IHNJ at Cumberland Lodge \(2013\)](#), as well as C&R Nos 11 and 12 of the [2nd Global Meeting in Hong Kong \(2015\)](#), all IHNJ members were encouraged to produce annual reports, including statistical data, and to disseminate these, both domestically and internationally. IHNJ members noted that such reports should also be uploaded to the IHNJ secure platform. It was noted that this would enhance the visibility of, and awareness to, the IHNJ.

VI. Role of the IHNJ in promoting DJC – Scope of action of members of the IHNJ

- 19 IHNJ members reiterated the utility of the Information Document on direct judicial communications for practitioners ([Prel. Doc. No 5 of June 2023](#)) and the document providing information on the

legal basis for direct judicial communications within the context of the IHNJ ([Prel. Doc. No 8 of June 2023](#)). IHNJ members encouraged their wide dissemination.

- 20 In order to make national judges aware of the application of 1980 and 1996 Conventions and related legislation, IHNJ members are encouraged to participate and promote internal training seminars for judges and other legal professionals, as well as to write articles for publications. IHNJ members are also encouraged to participate in international judicial seminars on child abduction and child protection and emphasise the importance of having the necessary resources for this purpose.

VII. Speedy procedures: Internal procedures applicable to cases under the 1980 Convention

- 21 Members of the IHNJ welcomed the presentations on the Inter-American “[Model Law](#) on Procedure for the application of the Conventions on International Child Abduction” and the “President’s Practice Guidance - Case Management and Mediation of International Child Abduction Proceedings” from England and Wales.
- 22 Recalling C&R No 19(g) from the [Eighth Meeting of the Special Commission on the practical operation of the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions](#) in 2023, IHNJ members welcomed a draft outline for a short model guide to court practice in the context of cases under the 1980 Child Abduction Convention.
- 23 IHNJ members noted that effective cooperation and communication between members of the IHNJ can be useful in the application of the 1980 Convention.

VIII. Examples of implementation of the Emerging Guidance and General Principles for DJC in domestic laws

- 24 Members of the IHNJ are encouraged, as may be appropriate, to implement the [Emerging Guidance and General Principles for DJC](#) in their domestic laws and / or court procedures / guidelines as is done in Canada, Hong Kong (China, SAR), Spain, and several States in Latin America. The “[Model Law](#) on Procedure for the application of the Conventions on International Child Abduction” was referred to as a possible model for that purpose.

IX. Role of the IHNJ in promoting HCCH Resources, including the Art. 13(1)(b) GGP, and assisting in their implementation

- 25 IHNJ members are encouraged to use and disseminate HCCH resources under the 1980 Child Abduction Convention (including the [Guide to Good Practice Part VI on Article 13\(1\)\(b\)](#)), the 1996 Child Protection Convention and the 2000 Protection of Adults Convention. It was noted that all these publications are available to the public free of charge on the HCCH website. In some States, these resources are shared through their electronic platforms. They are also referred to in judgments. Where possible, translation of these resources is encouraged.

X. Role of the IHNJ in ascertaining whether protective measures are available and enforceable in the State of habitual residence, to secure the safe return of the child

- 26 IHNJ members took note of the positive experience of Australia using their “Fact Sheet for Assistance with protective measures through the IHNJ for children ordered to be returned to Australia” which was presented at the Eighth Meeting of the Special Commission on the 1980 and

1996 Conventions in October 2023. Some members reported that they are developing a similar Fact Sheet.

- 27 IHNJ members noted that, when both States are Parties to the 1996 Convention, the State of habitual residence retains substantive jurisdiction to make welfare decisions for the child. It was recognised that having competent authorities seized in both States can facilitate direct judicial communications.

XI. Role of the IHNJ in coordinating issues of jurisdiction (including transfer) under the 1996 Convention

- 28 IHNJ members noted that transfer of jurisdiction is an important area in which the IHNJ has a key role in co-ordinating issues of jurisdiction. Members recognised that differences in legal systems of Contracting States can mean that transfer under Articles 8 or 9 of the 1996 Convention is legally straightforward but can be difficult in practice. In this regard, the IHNJ can facilitate the provision of key information, including what findings of fact have been made (if any), what orders are in force in respect of the child, whether and what deadlines the court has set for the transfer proceedings and what agencies are responsible for facilitating the transfer of the child. It was further noted that Central Authorities can also have an important role to play in the transfer of jurisdiction.

XII. Role of the IHNJ in facilitating the obtaining of the child's views in a cross-border context

- 29 IHNJ members shared their experiences of court procedures to hear children from their own jurisdictions. Members noted that the IHNJ can play an important role in the process of hearing children in cross-border cases. On this basis, it was encouraged that training and guidance be given to national judges in obtaining the views of the child in a cross-border context, bearing in mind possible cultural and legal differences that may be pertinent in such cases.
- 30 IHNJ members underlined the importance of hearing the child's views in cases under the 1980 Child Abduction and the 1996 Child Protection Conventions. Members discussed the advantages of videoconferencing technology in facilitating and, in some cases, enhancing this process.

XIII. Sharing the content of direct judicial communications with the parties to a dispute

- 31 IHNJ members underscored the importance of ensuring that direct judicial communications are sufficiently transparent, particularly with respect to the parties involved in the proceedings.

XIV. Growing the membership to the IHNJ: Opportunities and obstacles

- 32 IHNJ members recalled [C&D No 32 of CGAP 2023](#):

“Following the recommendations of the SC, CGAP:

- a. mandated extending the scope of the IHNJ to matters relating to the 2000 Protection of Adults Convention.
- b. encouraged Contracting Parties to designate one or more members of the judiciary for the purpose of judicial communications on matters relating to the 2000 Protection of Adults Convention. Designated members of the judiciary should be sitting judges, or members of the judiciary bound by the same standards of independence and impartiality as a sitting judge, with authority and, ideally, with experience in the area of

protection of adults. Contracting Parties could designate existing members of the IHNJ to that effect and / or new members;

- c. mandated the PB to keep the list of members of the IHNJ updated, indicating the areas of law for which each member is responsible; and
- d. mandated the extension, with the necessary adaptations, of the Emerging Guidance and General Principles on Direct Judicial Communications to the 2000 Protection of Adults Convention. Such adaptations could be carried out by a Working Group mainly constituted of members of the IHNJ, at a time when CGAP considers that a sufficient number of members of the IHNJ, representing different legal traditions, have been designated for the purpose of the 2000 Convention.”

33 To this end, IHNJ members encouraged the Permanent Bureau to create a specific list of IHNJ members for the 2000 Convention.

XV. Value of uploading case law involving direct judicial communication to INCADAT

34 IHNJ members encouraged the sharing of case law under the 1980 Child Abduction Convention with the Permanent Bureau, for upload on INCADAT, the database for child abduction caselaw under the 1980 Convention.

XVI. The IHNJ Secure Platform

35 IHNJ members encouraged the use of the Secure Platform, as it constitutes an extremely helpful resource.

36 IHNJ members welcomed the plans of the Permanent Bureau to improve the IHNJ Secure Platform. Subject to available resources, members welcomed the idea of having a part-time administrator to, for example, oversee the organisation of the Platform, uploads made to it and any necessary technical improvements.

XVII. The Judges’ Newsletter on International Child Protection

37 IHNJ members welcomed the recent volumes of the Judges’ Newsletter, the publication of which resumed in 2024. Previous volumes, which focused on issues such as international family relocation, the voice of the child and concentration of jurisdiction were noted as very useful. The publication of the Judges’ Newsletter, including, focused volumes, were encouraged, as were contributions by IHNJ members to.

XVIII. Future work

38 IHNJ members agreed to have online working group meetings dedicated to specific issues / projects, as needed and appropriate.

39 As soon as practicable, and subject to available resources, members agreed (in no particular order of priority):

- to draft an information sheet detailing the range of activities and role of IHNJ members;
- to progress the drafting of a short model guide to court practice (see C&R No 20 above); and
- to develop a model template for IHNJ national reports.

40 IHNJ members welcomed C&D No 32(d) of CGAP of 2023:

“Following the recommendations of the SC, CGAP [...] mandated the extension, with the necessary adaptations, of the Emerging Guidance and General Principles on Direct Judicial Communications to the 2000 Protection of Adults Convention. Such adaptations could be carried out by a Working Group mainly constituted of members of the IHNJ, at a time when CGAP considers that a sufficient number of members of the IHNJ, representing different legal traditions, have been designated for the purpose of the 2000 Convention.”

41 In the light of the organic growth of the activities and scope of the IHNJ, members raised that there are points which would support the need to review and revise the Emerging Guidance and General Principles on DJC. IHNJ members encouraged the Permanent Bureau to submit a proposal to CGAP 2026 to that effect.