

Gala opening remarks by Edmund Beerwinkel

Head: Product Management, JUTA LAW

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Meeting of the African Group of The International Association of Judges

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Safeguarding the Independence and Conditions of Service of Judicial Officers

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Good evening ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of Juta I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to you for allowing us to be part of your conference and inviting us to host this dinner. It is indeed an honour and a privilege.

Whilst there are many in the room who know Juta, I'm also aware that there are some of you who are not familiar with Juta and I would like to make use of this opportunity to give you a sense of who we are.

With a history spanning over 165 years, Juta is one of the leading South African providers of trusted legal and regulatory information, serving the judiciary, legal practitioners and corporate users of legal information. We have a rich repository of legal information available in both digital and print formats.

Our publishing endeavours are not only restricted to South Africa. We view ourselves as an African publisher and have published law titles of authors from Malawi, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, Namibia to name but a few. We have also published the case law and legislation of several African countries. In recent years our list of law journals focusing on the development of Southern African and African jurisprudence has also grown and serves as a platform for African researchers to publish their work in. In addition to publishing the case law and legislation for countries, we have also been transferring knowledge to different jurisdictions through skills training. We have been running writer workshops in the writing of headnotes, flynotes, case notes and in editing and managing a law reports series.

We publish one of the oldest Law Journals in the world, the *South African Law Journal*, which was established in 1884. We have textbooks and commentary works that have celebrated more than 40 years of publishing.

However, when the world changes as rapidly as it does today, one cannot rely on past achievements only. We have to continuously evolve to stay relevant to you, our customers. This means we need to be doing everything we can to stay relevant.

As an independent local player in the legal and academic publishing industry, and one that has weathered successive waves of technological change, it is a unique feat to have endured as we have since 1853. This milestone comes as we are poised to enter a new phase of technology-enabled growth. Juta continues to reinvent itself and does so by evolving to meet the shifting legal information needs of a range of users, and by diversifying our core skills and competencies.

It's one thing to be a respected and fondly regarded player in the SA legal information landscape, but it is imperative that Juta's business remains innovative and responsive to emerging trends. We are constantly presented with opportunities that redefine the value we can offer to the users who rely on our content, which is a hallmark of our rapidly changing legal information landscape.

Our soon-to-be-launched legal research platform, which we are calling Jutastat Evolve, will harness the quantum advances in AI and integrate this with our trusted, authoritative content. This will create a new generation of online products and solutions that satisfy the increasingly sophisticated information needs of our users, delivering results that radically redefine the user experience in unique and innovative ways.

We are not a large organization, and we operate in a market that is dominated by big international players. Yet, we like to think that we are holding our own. The reason for this is because we understand "our why". "Our Why" is defined as the purpose, or the cause, or belief, our passion for contributing to the greater good that drives our organization. Before we even look at the "what" and the "how", it is "our why" that drives us. It is a higher business purpose before we even think about profits. However, we are of the view that if your "why" is true and sincere, your "what", your "how" and profits will fall into place.

Our defining purpose is to enhance the rule of law and promote the administration of justice in SA and, by extension, Africa. We see ourselves as the trusted custodian of the country's wealth of legal knowledge that reflects the momentous political and social challenges we have been through as a nation. We are committed to meeting the challenges of the future and believe that access to our legal resources will contribute to the realisation of the shared goals of our constitutional democracy.

We have the added benefit that we are a 100% black-owned company and is wholly owned by Kagiso Media Limited. Consequently, we have shareholders who share our belief that we have a responsibility in making the law accessible and developing the jurisprudence in South Africa and Africa to benefit all in a world that is still characterized by vast inequalities. We do this through the works that we publish, partners that we collaborate with and our social responsibility initiatives that are geared to developing critical thinking and writing skills amongst young lawyers and students. An example of this is the *Ismail Mahomed Law Reform Essay Competition*, which we have been sponsoring since 1999 in partnership with the South African Law Reform Commission. This competition honours the legacy of the late former Chief Justice of South Africa, Justice Ismail Mahomed, and has evolved to also honour the legacy of the late Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, Justice Pius Langa.

We believe that the achievements of tomorrow lie in the capable, energetic hands and minds of our young people. Through these initiatives we are proud to contribute in some small way to enhancing the performance of legal practitioners and nurturing the legal luminaries of tomorrow.

That, in a nutshell, ladies and gentlemen, is who we are – we are not just our products or services, our books or other resources – those are expressions of "our why". I hope that I've been able to give you

a sense of who we truly are, and we look forward to collaborating with you as you strive to achieve “your why”.

We wish you every success as you deliberate over the next few days and trust that your objectives for the conference will be achieved. Thank you.