Press Statement
issued by the General Council of the Bar of South Africa on 24 July 1992

The 47th Annual General Meeting of the General Council of the Bar (GCB) was held in Johannesburg on Friday, 24 July 1992. A number of matters of concern to the advocates' profession and the administration of justice were discussed.

The GCB remains firmly of the view that a commission of enquiry, manned by a person or persons having the support of all sections of the community, including the legal professions, should be appointed to consider the structure and role of the courts and the legal profession, and in particular matters such as:

1. The quality of legal services offered to the public and the establishment of a comprehensive system of legal aid;
2. The qualifications and requirements for entry into the professions;
3. The structure or restructure of the Supreme Court, and in this regard –
   3.1 the establishment of specialised courts;
   3.2 the qualifications and requirements upon which the right of audience should be accorded in these courts;
3.3 the machinery to be established for the selection and appointment of judges in the Supreme Court and the qualifications and requirements for such appointments.

The GCB is firmly of the view that all these matters, and others, are interrelated and cannot and should not be considered in isolation. Accordingly, the GCB repeats its call for the appointment of such a commission.

The GCB notes with concern the lack of progress made to accommodate returning exiles with legal qualifications in the legal professions. The GCB proposals in this regard were submitted to the Minister of Justice during February 1991 and all justice groups in parliament have been furnished with copies of these particular proposals.

The GCB notes the preponderance of white male judicial appointments and supports judicial appointments on merit from the full spectrum of the community. Such candidates are to be found in the ranks of practising advocates and the numbers are growing rapidly.

The GCB remains committed to making whatever contribution it can to bring about peace in South Africa and calls upon the Government to facilitate the appointment of members of the Bar as Police Reporting Officers.

The GCB has noted with concern the apparent readiness of the negotiating parties at CODESA to accept the principle of detention without trial. The GCB restates its unqualified opposition to detention without trial and records its opposition to any attempt to provide for such detention in any future dispensation.

The GCB will continue to comment and make recommendations on legislation, but records its concern at the apparent inability of the Government to provide it timeously with draft legislation to enable meaningful comment and recommendations to be made, particularly on matters of vital public interest.

BR Southwood SC of the Pretoria Bar was elected Chairman of the GCB and W H Trengove SC of the Johannesburg Bar was elected Vice-Chairman.

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1. The prize will consist of R500 worth of Butterworths books, local or overseas, to be selected by the winner.
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3. The decision of the panel will be final.
4. Queries and correspondence should be directed to: The Editor, Consultus, Advocates' Chambers, 1605 Momentum Centre, East Tower, 343 Pretorius Street, Pretoria 0002 Tel: (012) 322-1511 (Ext 1605).

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