Good afternoon everyone.

I am here representing my colleague, Joe Trotter, who has been sitting at Dulles Airport in Washington D.C. waiting for the volcanic ash from Chile to lift so that he can come to Argentina. I was able to come because I came from Chile from another conference I was participating in.

We are honored to be participating in this monumental gathering and to join in the important discussions at this meeting. American University has been involved with judicial system form for many years through the training and technical assistance services we provide under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice.

We are truly overwhelmed by the vision and thought that is reflected in the Strategic Planning that is underway for the judicial system of the city of Buenos Aires as well as the range of issues that the panelists are addressing. It is unprecedented from our experience.

It reflects a deep grasp of the fundamental role a judicial system must play to
- Provide a respected and independent forum for resolving the wide range of disputes that emerge; and
- To engender the respect and confidence of the public in its independence, integrity, fairness and professionalism in every aspect of its operation.

Last year, we were truly inspired by the vision and deep commitment that we saw in the planning for the judicial system in the ‘city of Buenos Aires that reflected the principles of justice which we all share in both vision and theory as well as the many areas of practice that make the reality of the vision for the citizens who are served and depend upon the judicial system to maintain and sustain the rule of law.

The comprehensive planning process that has been initiated and is underway here is the critical tool for making the vision a reality.

It is providing both the vision and framework and blueprint for achieving the sound, independent justice system that embodies the principles of justice which we all cherish.

Although there may be differences in our respective judicial processes, we all share common values and experiences and are enriched through opportunities to exchange information and ideas through the type of planning process that has been developed in the city of Buenos Aires.

I am delighted to reference the MOU which is being finalized between the Buenos Aires Magistrates’ council and American University which Juan Jose referred to to further promote this type of ongoing information exchange and mutual enrichment.

For example, at last year’s conference there was much discussion about the issue of judicial selection and retention. Following that meeting, we worked with students to compile statutory
provisions in the US relating to the selection, retention and discipline of judges which we have assembled in a report which I have brought.

Similarly, we plan to take the Buenos Aires plan back to distribute to courts in the U.S. as an example of the outstanding methodology for strategic judicial system planning that we hope can be adapted by our state court systems.

We look forward to continuing to participate with the City of Buenos Aires in this important work and thank you again for the honor and privilege of being with you.