



Supreme Court of the Philippines OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON

February 5, 2026

SC Hosts Fourth International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network Meeting



Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo (seated, center) and Supreme Court (SC) Associate Justice Jose Midas P. Marquez (first row, standing left), Chairperson of the Fourth Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network (JDRN), with the delegates of the Fourth JDRN Meeting on January 26, 2026, at the Grand Hyatt Manila, in Taguig City. With them are: (seated, from left) Jamaica Chief Justice Bryan Sykes; Malaysia Chief Justice Datuk Seri Utama Wan Ahmad Farid bin Wan Salleh; Singapore Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon; Zimbabwe Chief Justice Luke Malaba; and Justice Dato' Abu Bakar bin Jais (first row, standing right), President of Court of Appeal, Federal Court of Malaysia, and Co-Chairperson of the Fourth JDRN Meeting, along with other delegates. (Photo courtesy of the SC Communications Office)

Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo led the Philippine Supreme Court (SC) in the *Fourth Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network (JDRN)* held on January 26 to 27, 2026, at the Grand Hyatt Manila in Taguig City and at The Judicial Academy Philippines in Tagaytay City, Cavite. He was joined by SC Associate Justice Jose Midas P. Marquez, *Fourth JDRN Meeting Chairperson*, and Associate Justice Raul B. Villanueva.

The *Meeting* brought together delegates from different countries to discuss developments and best practices in judicial dispute resolution (JDR). The JDR process refers to the proactive, judge-led management of cases, twinned with the use of a range of Court alternative dispute resolution (ADR) modalities to achieve the resolution of court disputes in full or in part so that judicial time is saved. The event underscored the JDRN's commitment to enhancing judicial efficiency and fostering collaboration among member courts.

Delegates came from the Philippines, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Dubai, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, the United Kingdom (UK),



Supreme Court of the Philippines OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON

the United States (US), and Zimbabwe. Other member courts from Australia, China, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Qatar, Rwanda, and the UK also joined the *Meeting* via videoconferencing.



Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo welcomes the delegates of the Fourth Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network held on January 26, 2026, at the Grand Hyatt Manila in Taguig City. (Photo courtesy of the Supreme Court Communications Office)

Justice Marquez and *Fourth JDRN Meeting* Co-Chairperson Justice Dato' Abu Bakar bin Jais, President of the Federal Court of Malaysia's (FCM) Court of Appeal, welcomed JDRN members from across the globe and underscored the importance of sustained cross-border collaboration within the JDRN.

Justice Marquez emphasized the significance of the *Fourth JDRN Meeting* as a landmark occasion, affirming their shared objective of strengthening JDR systems worldwide:

"This assembly is far more than a routine entry in our calendars. It is a truly exceptional occasion where distinguished minds and devoted champions of justice gather under one roof. In convening here, we affirm our shared commitment to strengthening dispute resolution systems, not only within our nations, but across the global community."

Justice Dato' Abu Bakar bin Jais extended appreciation to the SC for its hospitality and recognized the JDRN Secretariat's planning. He highlighted the steady growth of the JDRN and welcomed new member courts. He also underscored the importance of diversity in enriching dialogue and advancing best practice guides, noting the JDRN's achievement of publishing five guides in three years.



Supreme Court of the Philippines OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON



Supreme Court (SC) Associate Justice Jose Midas P. Marquez, Chairperson of the Fourth Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network (Fourth JDRN Meeting), opens the first day session of the Fourth JDRN Meeting held on January 26, 2026, at the Grand Hyatt Manila in Taguig City. (Photo courtesy of the SC Communications Office)

In the first Session, member courts discussed different approaches and reforms being adopted across their respective jurisdictions to improve accessibility, efficiency, and overall impact of JDR.

Court Administrator Ma. Theresa Dolores C. Gomez-Estoesta explained the Philippines' mediator accreditation process, which requires prospective mediators to complete an application, pass an examination, and conduct supervised mediation of real cases. They are required to conduct at least two successful mediations before endorsement to the SC for accreditation.

Session 2 covered JDRN administrative matters, including the approval of the minutes of the *Third JDRN Meeting* and updates on newly published practice guides. The admission of new member courts was also announced, significantly expanding the JDRN's global reach.

Session 3 featured a special presentation from the Supreme Court of India on its digital court initiatives, highlighting innovations such as India's National Judicial Data Grid and its eCourt system.

In the Chief Justices' Panel on the vital role of JDR in the effective and efficient administration of justice, Chief Justice Gesmundo emphasized the importance of ADR



Supreme Court of the Philippines OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON

n advancing the Philippine Judiciary’s long-term reform agenda under the *Strategic Plan for Judicial Innovations 2022-2027 (SPJI)*.

He explained that ADR is firmly grounded in the *SPJI*, a blueprint for making the justice system “more innovative, efficient, and people-centered.” Beyond technology and digitalization, innovations under the *SPJI* also involve rethinking traditional modes of adjudication and embracing processes like ADR that improve efficiency without compromising judicial integrity, Chief Justice Gesmundo said.

He cited as an example how prolonged litigation imposes heavy financial and emotional burdens on parties, often diminishing the value of a favorable judgment:

“When justice is reduced in the language of victory, something essential may be lost if this objective is blindly pursued at all costs. For the prevailing party, a favorable judgment that arrives too late may already be pointless. For the losing party, prolonged litigation may further deepen wounds instead of bringing genuine closure. Truly, delay carries consequences.”

The Chief Justice said ADR addresses this by providing timely and realistic processes for settlement. He underscored that ADR mechanisms help reduce case backlogs, decongest court dockets, and support more meaningful access to justice.



Delegates from member courts of the Judicial Dispute Resolution Network (JDRN) during the Fourth Meeting of the JDRN held on January 26, 2026, at the Grand Hyatt Manila in Taguig City. (Photo courtesy of the Supreme Court Communications Office)



Supreme Court of the Philippines OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON

During the panel discussion, Malaysia Chief Justice Datuk Seri Utama Wan Ahmad Farid bin Wan Salleh, Singapore Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Zimbabwe Chief Justice Luke Malaba, and Jamaica Chief Justice Bryan Sykes shared how their jurisdictions integrate ADR to manage increasing caseloads, enhance access to justice, and address the human impact of prolonged litigation. They noted that while it presents unique challenges, ADR remains a valuable tool when supported by skilled mediators and clear procedures.

The last session focused on updates on the development of practice guides for bankruptcy and insolvency disputes, personal injuries, and community and relational disputes.



Court Administrator Ma. Theresa Dolores C. Gomez-Estoesta during the opening program of the Fourth Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network held on January 26, 2026, at the Grand Hyatt Manila in Taguig City. (Photo courtesy of the Supreme Court Communications Office)

On the second day, retired SC Associate Justice Edgardo L. Delos Santos, Vice Chancellor of the Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA), welcomed the delegates to The Judicial Academy Philippines in Tagaytay City for another full-day session.

He stressed the Philippines' active role in the JDRN since its establishment in 2022 and underscored PHILJA's role in advancing JDR through training and reform. He also emphasized the importance of cross-border collaboration, which enables member courts to exchange best practices and build a foundation for efficient cross-border dispute resolution.

Retired Regional Trial Court (RTC) Judge Mona Lisa V. Tionsan-Tabora, Member of the PHILJA ADR Department, presented the overview of PHILJA's



Supreme Court of the Philippines OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON

training programs on court ADR mechanisms. She highlighted PHILJA's dedication to training judges and court staff for efficient dispute resolution.

The first session of Day 2 featured the strategies of member courts from Jamaica, Australia, and Dubai to advance their justice systems by adapting ADR. Each member court highlighted initiatives that streamline processes, promote early settlement, and improve user experience—from Jamaica's efforts to ease backlogs through expanded mediation, Australia's tribunal-wide restructuring that puts ADR as a core function, to Dubai's fully digital settlement model designed to resolve disputes quickly and efficiently.

The next session showcased presentations from member courts of Australia, UK, China, and Qatar, highlighting practical innovations such as early judicial intervention, structural reforms, and evolving mediation system.

The final session focused on the future direction of the JDRN. Chief Justice Menon of Singapore led the discussion on strengthening awareness of the JDRN and expanding its visibility across jurisdictions.



Supreme Court (SC) Associate Justice Jose Midas P. Marquez (first row, second from left), Chairperson of the Fourth Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network (Fourth JDRN Meeting), together with the delegates during Day 2 of the sessions on January 27, 2026 at The Judicial Academy Philippines in Tagaytay City, Cavite. Joining him are (first row, from left): retired SC Associate Justice Edgardo L. Delos Santos, Vice Chancellor of the Philippine Judicial Academy; Zimbabwe Chief Justice Luke Malaba; Singapore Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon; Jamaica Chief Justice Bryan Sykes; Justice Dato' Abu Bakar bin Jais, President of the Court of Appeal of the Federal Court of Malaysia and Co-Chairperson of the Fourth JDRN Meeting; Supreme Court of India Justices Rajesh Bindal and Alok Aradhe; along with other delegates. (Photo courtesy of the SC Communications Office)



Supreme Court of the Philippines OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON

In their closing remarks, Justice Marquez and Justice Dato' Abu Bakar bin Jais expressed appreciation to all the delegates and reaffirmed their resolve to continue collaborating with the JDRN.

Justice Marquez noted how the discussions during the *Meeting* demonstrated mediation and arbitration as essential mechanisms for effective dispute resolution:

“Our discussions have shown that mediation and arbitration are not just ancillary or even supplementary to hearings and trials of court cases. Mediation and arbitration, in fact, have proven to be imperative if not mandatory if we want to resolve disputes and cases more expeditiously, efficiently, and effectively.”

Their remarks formally concluded the final day of the *Fourth JDRN Meeting*.

The next day, the delegates visited the SC compound and Intramuros in Manila as part of the Grand Judiciary Tour, which commemorates the SC's 125th anniversary by offering guests an immersive journey through the rich history of the Philippine Judiciary. At the SC, they were warmly welcomed by Chief Justice Gesmundo, Senior Associate Justice Marvic M.V.F. Leonen and Associate Justices Amy C. Lazaro-Javier, Rodil V. Zalameda, Jhosep Y. Lopez, Japar B. Dimaampao, Marquez, Antonio T. Kho, Jr., and Villanueva. SC Spokesperson Atty. Camille Sue Mae L. Ting also greeted the delegates and welcomed them to the SC.



Delegates of the Fourth Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network during the Grand Judiciary Tour (GJT) on January 28, 2026, at the Supreme Court (SC) Session Hall in Manila. The GJT commemorates the SC's 125th anniversary by offering guests an immersive journey through the rich history of the Philippine Judiciary for guests of the Court. (Photo courtesy of the SC Communications Office)



Supreme Court of the Philippines OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON



Delegates of the Fourth Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network visit Intramuros in Manila as part of the Grand Judiciary Tour (GJT) on January 28, 2026. The GJT commemorates the SC's 125th anniversary by offering guests an immersive journey through the rich history of the Philippine Judiciary for guests of the Court. (Photo courtesy of the SC Communications Office)

The *Fourth JDRN Meeting* was organized by the SC as Chair and main host, and FCM as the Co-Chair, in coordination with the JDRN Secretariat.

It officially opened with a welcome reception on January 25, 2026, at the Grand Hyatt Manila, in Taguig City. The event was attended by Chief Justice Gesmundo and Justices Marquez and Villanueva. Also present were Chief Marshal Manuel R. Gaerlan; Deputy Marshal for Luzon Joel Napoleon M. Coronel; Deputy Marshal for Mindanao Eric B. Distor; SC Chief Communications Officer Atty. Michael Jobert I. Navallo; and Office of Justice Marquez Judicial Staff Head Atty. Kristine Leigh G. Domingo; along with other SC officials and lawyers.

The official dinner was held the following evening. It was attended by Chief Justice Gesmundo and Associate Justices Rodil V. Zalameda, Lopez, Marquez, and Villanueva. They were joined by Chief Marshal Gaerlan, Deputy Marshals Coronel and Distor; Atty. Navallo; Atty. Ting; Office of the Chief Justice Deputy Chief Justice Staff Head Atty. Antonio Cesar Manila; Atty. Domingo; and other SC officials and lawyers.



Supreme Court of the Philippines OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON



Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo (fifth from left) attends the official dinner of the Fourth Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network (Fourth JDRN Meeting) held on January 26, 2026, at the Grand Hyatt Manila in Taguig City. Together with him are: Supreme Court (SC) Associate Justices Rodil V. Zalameda (second from right), Jhosep Y. Lopez (first from right), Fourth JDRN Meeting Chairperson Jose Midas P. Marquez (second from left), and Raul B. Villanueva (first from left). Also present are (from left) Zimbabwe Chief Justice Luke Malaba; Singapore Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon; Jamaica Chief Justice Bryan Sykes; Malaysia Chief Justice Datuk Seri Utama Wan Ahmad Farid bin Wan Salleh; and President of the Court of Appeal, Federal Court of Malaysia and Fourth JDRN Meeting Co-Chairperson, Justice Dato' Abu Bakar bin Jais. (Photo courtesy of the SC Communications Office)

The delegates from the Philippines at the *Fourth JDRN Meeting* were Court Administrator Gomez-Estoesta, Court of Appeals Justice Eduardo S. Ramos, Jr.; Court of Tax Appeals Justice Maria Rowena Modesto-San Pedro; Judge Manuel Gerard C. Tomacruz of Branch 158, RTC, Pasig City; Judge Divina Luz P. Aquino-Simbunan of Branch 41, RTC, City of San Fernando Pampanga; SC Court Management Office Chief Atty. Marilou M. Anigan; and Atty. Domingo.

From Australia were Head of the Commercial Division and Chair of the ADR Committee of the County Court of Australia Judge Sharon Burchell; Judge in Charge of the Building Cases List Suzanne Kirton; and Deputy President and Head of ADR Division of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Carol Daicic.

Delegates from Brunei Darussalam were Senior Registrar of the Supreme Court of Brunei Darussalam Hajah Noor Amalina binti Dato Paduka Haji Alaihuddin and Magistrate Nur Eleana binti Dato Seri Paduka Haji Hairol Arni.

Canada was represented by Ontario Superior Court Justice Peter J. Cavanagh.

Joining from the Dubai Courts were Director of Dubai Courts Pro. Dr. Saif Ghanim Al Suwaidi; Advisor Governance and Strategic Planning Mohammed



Supreme Court of the Philippines OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON

Abdulrahman Mohd Ibrahim; CEO of Settlement and Enforcement Sector Ibraheam Ali Ahmad Alhosani; Head of Amicable Dispute Settlement Center Department, Mr. Essa Mohammed Hassan Bin Tamim; Director of Insolvency Management Department Ammar Saeed Alsyed Alhashmi; Director of Strategy and Institutional Performance Department Alia Abdulla Abduljabar Almajid; and Judge Bader AlJasmi.

Attending from the Supreme Court of India were Justice Rajesh Bindal, Justice Alok Aradhe, and Additional District & Sessions Judge, Haryana Judiciary & Special Duty (Registrar) Rajesh Sharma.

Jamaica was represented by Chief Justice Sykes, Justice Cresencia Brown Beckford, and Justice Carole Barnaby.

From Malaysia were Chief Justice Datuk Seri Utama Wan Ahmad Farid bin Wan Salleh; Justice Dato' Abu Bakar bin Jais; from the Chief Justice's Office, Deputy Registrar of the Research Division Maisarah Binti Juhari, Deputy Registrar of the Research Division Dr. Iriane Isabelo, and Special Officer Erry Shahrman Bin Nor Aripin; and Special Officer of The President Court of Appeal's Office Ms. Kaveetha a/p Armugem.

Delegates from New Zealand were Chief District Court Judge Heemi Taumaunu and District Court Judge Kevin Kelly.

From the Judiciary of Singapore, among the attendees were Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon; Judges of the Supreme Court & Presiding Judges of the State Courts, Justice Vincent Hoong and Justice Christopher Tan; from the Court Dispute Resolution (CDR) Principal District Judge Tan Boon Heng; District Judge and Group Manager Joseph Yeo; District Judges May Mesenas, Sheik Umar, Julian Chin, Gloria Lee; District Judge of the Community Courts & Tribunals Dora Tay; Supreme Court of Singapore Assistant Registrar Tan Zhi Xiang; and Director of the CDR, Ms. Dalbir Kaur.

Lady Justice of Appeal of the United Kingdom Royal Courts Justice Sarah Jane Asplin, also attended.

The United States was represented by Judge Mary Jo Heston of the US Bankruptcy Court in the Western District of Washington.

From the Judiciary of Zimbabwe were Chief Justice Malaba; Secretary of the Judicial Service Commission Dr. Walter Chikwana; and Protocol Officer Payida Nyoka.

The SC Ad Hoc Committee for the Hosting of the Fourth JDRN Meeting is headed by Associate Justice Alfredo Benjamin S. Caguioa as Chairperson and Justice Marquez as Working Chairperson. (*Press release courtesy of the SC Office of the Spokesperson*)