



INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE: NOVEMBER 2025

by **LISA MILLS**, KZN Bar, Durban
Officer of the IBA's Maritime and Transport Law Committee
and African Regional Forum Representative

I had the privilege of attending the IBA Annual Conference, which took place in Toronto, Canada from 2 to 7 November 2025. It was somewhat overwhelming, with more than 5,000 delegates from over 130 jurisdictions, including lawyers, corporate counsel, and policymakers.

At the opening ceremony, Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella was presented with the Benjamin Ferencz Rule of Law Lifetime Achievement Award, after which she delivered an incredible key-

note address. She gave a moving account of her family's history, from their internment at Treblinka in Poland to finding refuge in Canada, where her father, as a non-citizen, was not permitted to practice his vocation as a lawyer. This inspired her not only to become a lawyer herself but to be a brave trailblazer for human rights, equality and the rule of law. She has reshaped Canadian law over her long and stellar career as a judge and academic. Justice Abella is super smart, funny and authentic; an inspiration.





“[IBA PRESIDENT JAIME CAREY] SUGGESTED THAT ROBUST FRAMEWORKS, PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL DIALOGUE SHOULD ENSURE THAT AI AUGMENTS JUSTICE RATHER THAN ERODES IT.”

There was much focus on Artificial Intelligence at the conference and how it is reshaping the way we practise law. In his opening address, IBA president Jaime Carey

On day two, Captain Jeff Skiles, the co-pilot of US Airways Flight 1549 gave his chilling account of the emergency water landing dubbed “the Miracle on the Hudson”. He was flying the plane when it struck a flock of Canadian geese soon after taking off from LaGuardia airport in New York. Captain Sully took the controls immediately and Captain Skiles had the unenviable task of trying to find the procedure in the 200-page manual for dealing with twin engine loss at low altitude after a bird strike! In total the flight lasted five-and-a-half minutes – two minutes from take-off until hitting the geese, and then three-and-a-half minutes until landing in the icy water. The crew and passengers remained calm throughout and all 155 souls on board were saved. As this was a law conference, Captain Skiles explained some of the investigation protocols of air disasters in the United States.

One of my favourite recent reads is *Red Notice* by Sir Bill Browder. I was thrilled to discover on the eve of the conference that Sir Browder was to speak on the third day. He gave a harrowing account of his personal experience with President Putin’s regime, which culminated in the torture and death of his friend and lawyer, Sergei Magnitsky, in 2009. Browder has tirelessly campaigned for over a decade for Magnitsky Laws to be introduced throughout the free world (countries which he refers to as “rule of law states” ... sadly we were not on his list). These target corrupt Russian officials with travel bans and the freezing of their overseas assets. Browder believes that corruption is the basis for everything that happens in Russia, and that the war with Ukraine is Putin’s attempt to foster nationalist sentiment and take the focus off his regime’s massive looting of public coffers at the expense of its people. I was fortunate enough to shake his hand and exchange a few words afterwards, surrounded by a menacing looking security detail. He told me that he owns a house in Cape Town but has not considered it safe enough to visit in the past 15 years.

posited how lawyers can harness innovation without sacrificing accountability, fairness, transparency or dignity. He suggested that robust frameworks, professional standards and cross-jurisdictional dialogue should ensure that AI augments justice rather than erodes it. He spoke of the IBA’s work through its various committees and policy groups to provide practical guidance, training and research on how technology can be implemented responsibly and ethically.

The IBA Conference was a whirlwind of social events, panel discussions, talks and meetings. As an officer of the IBA’s Maritime and Transport Law Committee, my focus was on their meetings and events (which included a trip to Niagara Falls and a rock concert featuring our own band) as well as those of the African Regional Forum, which I represent on the Maritime committee. The conference was an enormous amount of fun and Toronto is the most beautiful city, especially in autumn. A quick detour to New York enabled me to rendezvous with my AFS (American Field Service) host sister whom I have not seen for over 30 years. The flight from LaGuardia was, thankfully, uneventful. **A**

