

# Meeting with the Senior Vice President of the World Bank

08/11/2023



**On November 3, 2023, First President Christophe Soulard met with Christopher Stephens, Senior Vice President and General Counsel of the World Bank Group at the Cour de cassation. The two institutions signed a memorandum of understanding on their cooperation.**

On November 3, First President Christophe Soulard welcomed Christopher Stephens, Senior Vice President and General Counsel of the World Bank Group, to the Cour de cassation for a discussion on the rule of law in international development, the workings of the Cour de cassation and the French judicial model. The meeting concluded with the signing of a cooperation agreement between the two institutions - an historic first.

During the meeting, Mr. Stephens presented the link between economic development and the rule of law identified by the World Bank, as well as the many projects it is currently undertaking to bring these two objectives together in its aid and assistance projects for developing countries.

The First President explained the many differences between the French judicial institution and those of other countries, notably with regard to the structure of the supreme courts, the training system at the Ecole Nationale de la Magistrature, the career path of magistrates in their various roles and functions, and the great importance attached to independence in the French conception of justice.

Discussions then turned to the fundamental differences between the common law and civil law systems (also known as continental law), notably the place of case law in the hierarchy of norms and the normative role of the judge. These distinctions must be taken into account in international cooperation when a country from one legal culture collaborates with a country from another.

Mr. Stephens noted that the legal systems of many developing country members of the World Bank are based on civil law, and that many draw heavily on the French legal tradition. He stressed the importance of the World Bank learning from its partners, such as the Cour de Cassation, and working with them to draw on their knowledge and experience in order to strengthen the place of the rule of law in international development policies.

Although their activities and aims are quite distinct, the two institutions face common challenges in promoting and safeguarding the rule of law, and in tackling the new challenges posed by digital technology and artificial intelligence. For example, the meeting discussed how to ensure and promote transparency in the justice system, and strike a balance between accessibility and efficiency.

Feedback from the Haute Juridiction served as a rich case study for the World Bank, which now wishes to call on the expertise of judicial institutions to make effective the recommendations and legal and judicial conditions set out in the aid and assistance instruments granted by the Bank. The Bank aims to strengthen the capacity and stability of the legal systems in developing countries, in particular through the introduction of independence requirements, anti-corruption measures, and the creation of model procedures that can be integrated into domestic systems. Both institutions rely on a range of new technologies and digitization techniques to optimize institutional operations through gains in efficiency and effectiveness.



The presentations identified numerous areas of cooperation and synergy between the World Bank and the Cour de cassation in terms of sharing knowledge, expertise, methodologies and scientific resources to promote the rule of law worldwide.

At the end of these exchanges, the First President and Mr. Stephens wished to formalize this joint wish for partnership between the Cour de cassation and the World Bank by signing an agreement establishing guidelines for the two institutions to work together.

This cooperation is part of the First President's international strategy to disseminate the Court's jurisprudence, promote its expertise and mobilize institutional resources for the benefit of the rule of law and the work of judges beyond our borders.

