

Resolution on raising the retirement age for judges in Sri Lanka

Committee on European and International Affairs

Annual General Meeting of 3 July 2026



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SUMMARY

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NOTE

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is facing a major economic crisis in 2022, with a \$51 billion default on its external debt. To address this, it is benefiting from an IMF programme (2023–2027). France maintains close relations with the island nation. Indeed, alongside Japan and India, it co-chairs the country's Sovereign Creditors' Committee, facilitating coordination amongst public creditors.

With this in mind, on 16 June 2025, France and Sri Lanka signed a bilateral agreement to reschedule €390 million of debt until 2042, with a five-year grace period and a cap on interest rates.

On 24 July 2025, the French Development Agency (AFD) and the Sri Lankan Ministry of Finance signed a letter to resume lending operations, which had been suspended since 2022. This agreement paves the way for financing aimed at climate action and the island's resilience.

At the professional level, the National Bar Council (CNB) also maintains excellent relations with the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL), the representative body of the profession established in 1974, which now has 25,000 members, known as 'Attorneys-at-Law'. Like the CNB, the BASL defends the independence of the bar and the rule of law, and takes a stand on issues relating to civil liberties and fundamental rights.

On 3 June 2026, the CNB's Committee on European and International Affairs met with a delegation from the Sri Lankan Bar. On this occasion, the two institutions were able to discuss a future draft agreement – a Memorandum of Understanding – focusing in particular on solidarity in protecting the rule of law and the defence of lawyers at risk. This draft MoU also aims to strengthen the exchange of legal knowledge and professional standards between France and Sri Lanka. The long-term objective is to continue developing a sustainable collaboration between the legal professions of the two countries, based on the exchange of expertise and joint projects in the legal field.

It is also with a view to this new collaborative project that the CNB is joining forces with the BASL – whose concerns it shares – by adopting this resolution.



RESOLUTION OF THE CONSEIL NATIONAL DES BARREAUX

ON RAISING THE RETIREMENT AGE FOR JUDGES IN SRI LANKA

Adopted by the general meeting on 3 July 2026

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The Conseil national des barreaux, meeting in General Assembly on 3 July 2026,

HAVING TAKEN NOTE of the letter dated 25 May 2026 from the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) to the President of the Republic of Sri Lanka, in which the BASL expresses concern regarding a proposed amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution by the Government aimed at raising the retirement age of judges;

NOTING that the said letter states, inter alia, that 'Raising the retirement age of serving judges in these courts at this stage is likely to be perceived by the public as a blatant attempt to interfere with the judiciary.';

NOTING the statement by the Commonwealth Lawyers' Association (CLA) which shares the BASL's concerns and recalls Principle IV of the Commonwealth Principles (Latimer House) relating to the three branches of government, which states that 'An independent, impartial, honest and competent judiciary is essential to upholding the rule of law, fostering public confidence and administering justice.';

RECALLS that the independence of the judiciary, recognised by the Constitution of Sri Lanka, is one of the pillars of maintaining and preserving the rule of law and the public's confidence in the institutions;

RECALLS that any constitutional reform proposal should be preceded by adequate consultation with stakeholders, in accordance with the requirements of due process and democracy;

EXPRESSES its full support for the BASL regarding its legitimate concerns about this proposed constitutional reform;

CALLS ON the Sri Lankan authorities to refrain from proceeding with the proposed constitutional amendments aimed at raising the retirement age of members of the judiciary and to refrain from taking any measures likely to undermine the public's confidence in the judiciary;

CALLS more broadly, on the Sri Lankan and French authorities and the international community as a whole to use all means at their disposal to ensure respect for the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary.

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Done at Paris on 3 July 2026.