



*Judy Keegan, Alabama Center for Dispute Resolution director, explains the principles behind dispute resolution to visitors from 10 African nations, as part of a professional exchange program sponsored by the U.S. State Department.*



KEITH B. NORMAN

## Rendering Service to Those from Another Continent

In June, the Alabama State Bar hosted representatives from 10 African nations who were guests of the Alabama Center for Dispute Resolution ("Center"). These guests were participants in the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) sponsored by the United States Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The IVLP, one of the Bureau's premier professional exchange programs, is designed to build mutual understanding between the U.S. and other countries through carefully planned visits that reflect the participants' professional interests and support U.S. foreign policy goals. Selected by American embassies abroad, these international visitors come to the U.S. to meet and confer with their professional counterparts.

Our guests represented the African nations of Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, and Togo. They came here to learn specifically about conflict resolution and will be visiting local programs, as well as other state programs, while they are in the U.S. Nearly a third of Africa is engulfed in intractable violent conflicts, which have resulted in massive loss of life and human rights abuses, caused the collapse of state institutions, exacerbated corruption, aggravated the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and destroyed infrastructure.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Continued from page 321

The State Department has outlined several specific themes for this particular visit:

To enhance participants' understanding of U.S. perspectives on the use of dispute resolution and/or preventative diplomacy in domestic and international situations;

To familiarize participants with the diverse perspectives of public and private organizations active in alternative diplomacy and conflict resolution;

To provide an understanding of various techniques for mitigating or resolving a variety of conflicts and/or disputes resulting from ethnic, religious, socioeconomic and regional differences; and

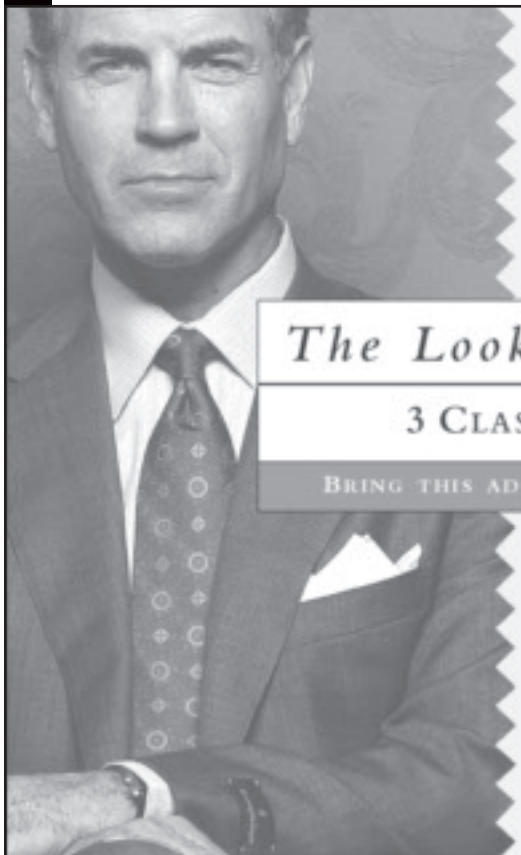
To introduce participants to the training of conflict resolution specialists by universities and professional organizations.

**Judy Keegan**, the center's director, organized this conflict resolution briefing for our international visitors. Their



ASB Executive Director Keith B. Norman outlines the structure of the bar for the visiting guests as part of a discussion of how our legal profession is regulated.

professional backgrounds were varied: lawyers, judges, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, municipal leaders, the military, and representatives of human rights organizations. Topics for the center's briefing were: *Mediation of General and Civil Commercial Disputes*; the *Appellate Mediation Program*;



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Visitors included lawyers, judges, government officials, municipal leaders, military leaders, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and human rights groups.

*How it Works; Mediation and the Alabama Supreme Court; and Mediation of Family/ Domestic Disputes Including Divorce, Post-Divorce, Custody and the Elderly.* Assisting with the center's briefing were: **Robert Ward**, attorney and member of the Alabama Supreme Court Commission on Dispute Resolution; **Rebecca Oats**, assistant clerk, Alabama Court of Civil Appeals, and liaison member to the Alabama Supreme Court Commission

on Dispute Resolution; **Justice Harold See**, former supreme court justice and member of the Alabama Supreme Court Commission on Dispute Resolution; and **Cheryl Leatherwood**, mediator, Administrative Office of Courts, and member of the Alabama Supreme Court Commission on Dispute Resolution.

Our visitors from these African nations are the latest group of international visitors hosted by the Alabama State Bar. Past guests have been from Russia, Kazakhstan (but not Borat!), the Bahamas and Brazil. Although it was necessary to use translators on this occasion, as on past occasions, our African visitors seemed to have gotten a very clear picture of the benefits of incorporating dispute resolution with governmental institutions. In the process, we gained a broader perspective of those nations represented, as well as learned about some of their problems and needs. It is hoped that through such visits, not only have we imparted concepts and ideas that our guests can put to good use in their countries, but, in the process, we have witnessed the world become a little smaller. ▲▼▲

Check your calendar, mark the date, plan to attend, and look for the program brochure six weeks prior to the seminar.



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- 25 Legal Writing/Appellate Practice

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- 2 20th Annual Bankruptcy Law Seminar
- 29-30 Southeastern Business Law Institute 2009

### November

- 6 Class Action Litigation

### December

- 4 23rd Annual Workers' Compensation Seminar
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