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EXCELLENCE ACROSS DISCIPLINES

While the notion of establishing a society to promote scholarship – and in particular research that involves members of academia, the professions and those involved in the administration of the law – is not novel, it has taken surprisingly long for such an organisation to get off the ground. Although there are a number of extremely important and effective societies and various other organisations, we do not have a single learned society for those involved in the law which is capable of embracing all those, whether in practice or academia, who wish to foster improvement in the law and its administration through promoting scholarship and greater understanding. The Society for Advanced Legal Studies hopes to strengthen and support the various initiatives, whether in the academic world or within the profession, that already exist and which may develop to promote the study and refinement of law. Consequently, it is pleasing to see the level of support that the new Society has already received, not only from individual lawyers around the world, but also governments and academic institutions. Any doubts that existed as to the viability and importance of this initiative were soon dispelled and I am convinced that our Society, despite its youth, is now well established.

The desire to foster and support other initiatives is manifest in the assistance that both the Society and the Institute have been able to give to an even newer organisation – The British Japan Law Association. The Institute has always been concerned to promote comparative research, and given the close ties that it has enjoyed over many years with scholars and members of the judiciary from Japan, the Institute initiated a comparative law programme two years ago in co-operation with Japanese and Australian universities. This has already resulted in two conferences, several publications and collaboration in research. There was little doubt therefore within the Institute and Society that it would be entirely appropriate for us to support the establishment of this Association and to launch a series of public lectures to be held at the Institute on comparative law issues. It is our expectation that similar programmes will be developed in the near future with other such groups, greatly strengthening co-operation and scholarly collaboration.

The Institute of Advanced Legal Studies has always had a national role in supporting and promoting research, and the Society must be no less parochial. During this year a number of public lectures and other events will be held outside London, in addition to a full programme of events in the capital. The Institute has always received and assisted a large number of visitors from overseas and since its foundation has enjoyed an international reputation. By the same token, the Society must be no less committed to embracing scholars and practitioners from overseas. Indeed, we are delighted that already a considerable number of eminent academicians and senior lawyers from other countries, including a number of judges, have joined us. The Society has been in communication with similar organisations in other countries as diverse as the Argentine and China, and is pleased with the level of interest and goodwill that has been indicated. Our law has been our greatest ambassador over many years, and long may this last!

Professor Barry Rider