



CHAIRMAN'S JANUARY 2021 MESSAGE

A Happy New Year to one and all. There seems to be an overwhelming sense of relief that we have made it through 2020, a year that will be remembered most for COVID-19 and the impact it has had on all our lives. As we look ahead with optimism for 2021, we are constantly reminded that the battle is far from over as we see many countries facing second, third and subsequent waves of the pandemic.

In October 2020, the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Alternative Dispute Resolution released its report, "*Securing the UK's position as global disputes hub: lessons from Singapore*". The report was based on a fact-finding trip to Singapore in August and sets out a vision for what it will take to be a leading hub for the management and resolution of disputes. We are proud that the Singapore Branch hosted members of the APPG, MPs John Howell and John Spellar, giving them an overview of the arbitration landscape in Singapore. Do read the report at https://www.ciarb.org/media/12067/appg-report_digital.pdf

In my capacity as the Chair of the Singapore Branch, I attended CI Arb Congress 2020 on 10 November 2020. It was held virtually with branch chairs across the world dialling in. During Congress, Jane Gunn was elected Deputy President with effect from 1 January 2021 and will assume the Presidency in 2022. John Bassie will become Vice President on 1 January 2022, Deputy President in 2022 and President in 2023. During Congress, branch chairs were also broken up into small groups for a workshop session. I had the opportunity to discuss various matters of mutual concern with chairs of other branches across the world as well as Jonathan Wood, Chair of the Board of Trustees.

At the beginning of December 2020, the amendments to the Singapore International Arbitration Act came into force. Firstly, new Section 9B of the Act provides a default procedure for the appointment of arbitrators in multi-party arbitrations. Pursuant to this procedure, in multi-party arbitrations with three arbitrators, all claimants are to jointly appoint an arbitrator, all respondents are to jointly appoint an arbitrator, and the two party-appointed arbitrators are to jointly appoint the presiding arbitrator. Where the Claimants or Respondents are unable to come to an agreement on their choice of arbitrator(s), the appointing authority must, upon the request of any party, appoint all three arbitrators at its own discretion. The second amendment expressly recognises that a Singapore-seated tribunal (12(1)(j) of the Act) and the Singapore High Court (section 12A(2) of the Act) have the power to enforce any applicable obligations of confidentiality.

The end of 2020 saw our own Francis Xavier SC step down as global president of CI Arb. Francis has done a tremendous job during his time as global president, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. I am sure you will join me in thanking Francis for his invaluable contribution to CI Arb as well as his continuing involvement in the Singapore Branch. May I also take this opportunity on behalf of the Singapore Branch to congratulate Ann Ryan Robertson for assuming the position of global president on 1 January 2021.

The past few months have seen an increase in the level of engagement between 12 Bloomsbury Square and the branches in the Asia Pacific region. Catherine Dixon, the Director General of CIArb has been hosting regular calls with the chairs of the branches in the region. These calls have offered a great opportunity for HQ to update us on initiatives being implemented globally as well as for us to raise matters of concern to HQ. One of the issues raised during these calls is the desire for greater collaboration among the branches in the region. To this end, I am pleased that the East Asia Branch, Malaysian Branch and Singapore Branch will be jointly conducting the online Introduction to International Arbitration Course on 5 March 2021. I am also delighted that Amanda Lees will be course director for this Course, with tutors from the three branches participating this course.

I am also pleased that the Board of Trustees have approved our Branch Development Plan and Supporting Business Plan for 2021. My personal thanks go out to those who have worked hard on this Business Plan and I look forward to us implementing our plans this year. It is hoped that with businesses getting used to the new norm and with the roll out of the vaccines, we will be able to host more in-person courses and events in due course. Do check our website for details of upcoming events.

Before I end, could I express my congratulations to the following Singapore Branch members who attained their fellowship status in the last quarter of 2020:

1. Yasir Kadhim
2. Myriam El Kara
3. Wei Khai Tan
4. Michael Pringle
5. Melvin Hsien Huei See
6. Anne Secomb
7. Eugene Wei Liang Thong
8. Kia Jeng Koh
9. Gang Duan
10. Seow Hwei Mar
11. Matthew Brown
12. Vanessa Lim
13. Jen Wei Loh
14. Denny Dianyan Lin
15. Alla Smirnova
16. Kia Meng Loh
17. Moon Kua
18. Wei Lee Lim

It remains for me to thank all members and fellows for their support of the Branch and its activities in what has been a challenging past year.

Paul Sandosham, Chairman