



CHAIRMAN'S MAY MESSAGE

For those of us in Singapore, we are just about four weeks into the "Circuit Breaker" restrictions imposed by the Singapore Government to curb the spread of COVID-19. The Government has since extended the Circuit Breaker till 1 June.

The restrictions have seen people adjusting to working from home and communications taking place over zoom and other similar platforms. The traditional in-person seminars have given way to webinars. The dispute resolution world has also been giving much thought to addressing the challenges to hearings brought about by COVID-19 and the corresponding restrictions imposed by authorities across the world. Many arbitral institutions including the ICC and SIAC have issued guidance notes or conducted webinars on potential measures at mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The question at the back of everyone's minds must be whether virtual hearings may be the new norm post the COVID-19 pandemic. Being at the forefront of thought leadership, CI Arb has launched its new **Guidance Note on Remote Dispute Resolution Proceedings**, designed to equip both neutrals and parties with the necessary tools and techniques for conducting dispute proceedings in compliance with social distance regulations. We are proud that one of our board members, Tim Cooke, was a member of the Review Committee for this Guidance Note, which will no doubt be helpful to arbitrators, counsel and parties.

Despite the restrictions in place, it is almost business as usual for the branch. We continued with fellowship peer interviews for aspiring fellows with the interviews conducted virtually. Although we had to defer the commencement of the Module 1 Law, Practice & Procedure of International Arbitration course, the second tutorial for Module 4 proceeds on 8 May in a virtual classroom. Read more about the *Bigbluebutton* that CI Arb has introduced for virtual learning and assessments <https://www.ciarb.org/news/ciarb-introduces-bigbluebutton-for-virtual-learning-and-assessment/>. The branch also held its AGM on 28 April, the first time ever that it was held virtually, with members dialling in by phone. I would like to extend my congratulations and welcome to Michael Peer who was elected as a Director of the Board. My thanks go to Mark McGeogh who stepped down as a Board member, for his contributions to the branch.

In the Courts, the Singapore Court of Appeal's judgment in *AnAn Group v VTB Bank* [2020] SGCA 33 generated much commentary when it confirmed that a prima facie standard of review applies when considering whether to stay a winding-up application on the basis of a debt which is subject to an arbitration clause.

Finally, on behalf of the Singapore branch, I send my best wishes to Anthony Abrahams who recently retired as the Director General of CI Arb. I also extend the branch's best wishes to Catherine Dixon who assumed the role of Director General of CI Arb on 1 May 2020. We look forward to working with Catherine to further the objectives of CI Arb in Singapore and the region.

Paul Sandosham, Chairman