

Message of the President

Dear ASA-Members

This will probably be **my last Message**. In fact, as already announced at the ASA Conference of 31 January 1997, I am going to step down as the President of the Association at the occasion of our Ordinary Assembly on 5 September 1997 in Berne.

This is the moment to pause and briefly **look back** on my 6 ½ years during which I have been in charge, so as to identify the bright moments as well as the shadows.

- **Shadows:** In fact, there were none! It is true that the office brings with it quite a bit of work and, at times, tends to absorb more time than available. However, I have very thoroughly enjoyed this work.
- **Remains the bright side:** Here, my list would have to be overly long, and thus I would simply wish to recall the large number of meetings and conferences, in Switzerland and around the globe, at which I had the privilege to participate. Most of all, however, I would like to mention the great support and the appreciation I have received from the members of the Executive Committee and from so many members of the Association. This support and appreciation made my task most rewarding, and I owe my most sincere gratitude to all of you. I would also like to thank my secretary Mrs Elisabeth Bollin who has accompanied my work during the last 16 years, as well as my partners at Bär & Karrer who have supported my tasks and, last but not least, my wife Esther for her understanding when night-shifts or travels reduced my availability for the family.

"Why do you step down, why don't you accept another tenure?" This is a question I frequently hear, and my answer to that is that I prefer to hand over the presidency at a time when the question still is *"why does he go?"*, as opposed to *"when does he go?"*. In fact, as I believe, this is the right moment to

hand over the presidency to a successor who will lead the Association into the next millennium.

Looking towards the future ...

We have frequently discussed the phenomenon of the emergence of new arbitration centres, and we have seen these as a kind of competition to the privileged position which Switzerland has succeeded to keep (and even reinforce) over the past decades. Do we need to fear to "lose ground"? Does the future lie in arbitration centres such as CIETAC in Beijing or HKIAC in Hong Kong?

I believe that the still fast growing expansion of international arbitration as the most appropriate method for settling international disputes will need a place such as Switzerland even more than ever before. Indeed, Switzerland is well placed in the heart of the economic world and, by its traditional openness, may be seen as **a place with identical equidistance between East and West, North and South.**

Thus, Switzerland is still the "hope" for the American supplier who sold equipment to Turkey, for the Russian manufacturer who supplied equipment for a plant in Africa, and for the German-Swedish joint-venture that supplied a turn-key facility to the Middle-East. **They all rely on Switzerland**, with the expectation to find here highly qualified and experienced **arbitrators** committed to their tasks and to their mission, and to find **lawyers** who are well organized and capable of leading a large international case - and we can confidently say that they will find them here in Switzerland!

Thus, there is no doubt in my mind that Switzerland will, in future, play an even more important role as a preferred venue for hosting international arbitration. We have all the means available to fulfil the high expectations. Switzerland is open and has no limits or limitations in this regard. Thus, I may conclude this "Message" by recalling a sentence by Wayne W. Dyer: ***"The only limits we have are the limits we believe"***.

Marc Blessing, President

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