

President's Message

What have been the latest events on the international arbitration scene? Some major international conferences have recently taken place. The ICCA Congress in May in Beijing featured many good sessions, which were particularly interesting in that they provided an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with numerous Chinese arbitration practitioners. The trip to China also provided an occasion to witness once again the amazing development boom in China, with its tremendous economic potential (how will the world look in ten years from now?...), and – last but not least – to admire the Forbidden City.

The ITA Conference in June in Dallas was another well-attended event. This year, the conference took the form of a workshop on arbitral advocacy, which proved to be both highly instructive and truly entertaining. A real achievement!

Turning to recent developments in Switzerland, let me first mention that the Arbitration Committee of the Swiss Chambers of Commerce has very recently decided to amend the Swiss Rules of International Arbitration to allow the parties to choose a seat outside of Switzerland. Effective as of August 1, 2004, Article 1(2) of the Swiss Rules will thus read: 'The parties are free to designate the seat of the arbitration anywhere in Switzerland *or elsewhere*'. This change is a welcome response to a suggestion repeatedly made by users since the Swiss Rules came into force earlier this year.

The launch of a new ASA local group in Lausanne represents a further positive development. Following the recent establishment of the Swiss Italian group, this latest newcomer increases the number of ASA local groups to the mythic number of seven. We wish this new local group much success!

Finally, with respect to future events, all members and friends of ASA will no doubt reserve the date of January 21, 2005 for the next annual conference, which will be held in Basel (the final program will be mailed and posted on the ASA website shortly). The conference will deal with arbitrating merger and acquisition disputes, a complex topic of major practical relevance.

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