Kluwer Arbitration Blog

Ruler appoints new Chairman of DIAC Board of Trustees

Gordon Blanke (Blanke Arbitration LLC) · Thursday, January 29th, 2015

By virtue of a recent Decree (see Decree No. (47) of 2014 Reshuffling the Board of Trustees of the Dubai International Arbitration Center, issued in Dubai on 7 December 2014), HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Ruler of Dubai, has appointed Dr. Habib Al Mulla, founder of former Habib Al Mulla & Co, which entered into a historic merger with one of the world's largest law firms, Baker & McKenzie, in 2013, as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Dubai International Arbitration Center (DIAC).

Since its foundation in 2004, the DIAC has grown into one of the leading arbitration institutions in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the wider Middle East. Amongst its former Chairmen and executive management, the DIAC counts true arbitration prominence, such as the doyen of international arbitration Martin Hunter of Essex Court Chambers in London and former Director Nassib Ziade, who held the position of Secretary General of ICSID before joining the DIAC. Immediate predecessor of Dr. Al Mulla was *eminence grise* Jan Paulsson, co-founder of arbitration boutique Three Crowns.

Dr. Al Mulla is the first Emirati to be appointed to the chairmanship of DIAC's Board of Trustees. Being a post-graduate of both Harvard and Cambridge, Dr. Al Mulla has become one of the leading authorities in UAE law and has unrivalled experience in the practice of both domestic and international arbitration. He has contributed to the creation of the regulatory framework that was to become the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) and has been a driving force in DIAC's success story since its inception in 2004. In this new position, Dr. Al Mulla will face a number of challenges that require immediate attention: Apart from the long-overdue revision of the DIAC Rules, Dr. Al Mulla will have to appoint a new Director to the helm of the DIAC in order to fill the void that has been left by the departure of Mr. Ziade in 2013. It will be interesting to see whether Dr. Al Mulla will be swayed by a local choice of director or whether he will keep the directorship international as in previous years.

Apart from appointing the new Chairman of the Board of Trustees, the Decree also made some new appointments of membership, including Prof. Filip de Ly, Professor at the Erasmus School of Law in Rotterdam, Phillip Capper, Partner of US firm White & Case in London, and Swedish arbitrator Ulf Franke, former President of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce Arbitration Institute. Also confirmed as a member of the Board has been arbitration heavyweight Bernard Hanotiau of Van den Berg Hanotiau, Brussels, Belgium. The DIAC Executive Committee – responsible for default appointments, challenges of arbitrators and the determination of arbitration costs – remains under the leadership of Prof. Tarek Riad of Cairo law firm Kosheri Rashed & Riad,

who is serving his second term and has been an ardent supporter of the DIAC since its founding days.

With the adoption of the new membership of the DIAC Board of Trustees exciting times lie ahead! Watch this space for further reporting on how the DIAC will fare under Dr. Al Mulla's leadership.

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