

Kluwer Arbitration Blog

LIDW 2025: Arbitral Institutions Congress

Visalakshy Gupta · Saturday, June 7th, 2025

Following its resounding success last year, the [Arbitral Institutions Congress](#) made a comeback, featuring on day 3 of the London International Disputes Week (“LIDW”) 2025. The event comprised of representatives from several global arbitral institutions as well as regional arbitral institutions and was held in the historic Queen’s Room at Middle Temple. The event was co-hosted by McNair International, Clyde & Co LLP, and Osborne Clarke.

Since the event was held under the [Chatham House Rule](#), this blog post offers only a general overview of the discussions without revealing the identity or affiliation of any of the speakers.

The Role of an Arbitral Institution in its Relationship with Arbitrators

The first panel was moderated by [Khawar Qureshi](#) from McNair International, and consisted of participants from a wide array of institutions. The panel included [Chris Campbell-Holt](#), Registrar and Chief Executive of Astana International Financial Centre Court & International Arbitration Centre (“AIFC-IAC”); [Shan Greer](#), Chief Executive Officer and Registrar of British Virgin Islands International Arbitration Centre (“BVI IAC”); [Tarek Badawy](#), representing Cairo Regional Centre for International Commercial Arbitration (“CRCICA”); [Prof. Dr. Ziya Akinci](#), President of Istanbul Arbitration Centre’s Board (“ISTAC”); [Jackie Oyuyo](#), Non-Executive Director at Nairobi Centre for International Arbitration (“NCIA”); [Korinna von Trotha](#), Executive Director at Swiss Arbitration Centre (“SAC”); and [Shwetha Bidhuri](#), Director & Head (South Asia) of Singapore International Arbitration Centre (“SIAC”).

The opening discussions focused on the challenges that institutions were facing on account of the international sanctions imposed on Russian parties. Several institutions shared diverging approaches. One institution reaffirmed a strict policy of refusing to administer disputes involving sanctioned parties to safeguard institutional integrity. Others highlighted their continued neutrality and independence in sanction-related matters, thereby enabling ongoing engagement with Russian parties and ensuring access to justice.

Turning to issues concerning credible arbitrator rosters, one of the institutions outlined its three-tier system comprising a main panel of seasoned professionals, a list for arbitrators with a minimum of five cases and authored awards, and a confidential category for first-time appointees. Another panellist emphasized the difficulties of appointing language-qualified arbitrators in sensitive regional contexts. Across the panel, there was broad consensus on the importance of diversifying

appointments. Notably, CRCICA confirmed that about 30% of its recent appointments were individuals under the age of 40, while ISTAC reported that 46% of its appointments last year were women, thereby demonstrating significant strides toward addressing demographic imbalances in terms of gender and age.

Concerns around arbitrator performance and accountability also featured prominently. Although formal blacklisting remains a sensitive issue, some institutions are introducing measures to monitor and address underperformance. The panel expressed unanimous support for stronger inter-institutional collaboration on matters of sanctions and arbitrator conduct, with proposals for structured forums to promote transparency and alignment.

The conversation then shifted to feedback and performance monitoring mechanisms. Institutions broadly acknowledged the absence of formal systems to assess arbitrator performance. In practice, many rely on informal indicators, such as case manager observations or non-renewal of arbitrator appointments. Some institutions also utilize feedback from parties. There was consensus on the value of these practices and a recognition that greater consistency is needed.

The session further underscored the importance of maintaining full disclosures as to independence and impartiality, and emphasized the arbitrators' obligations to continually disclose any such relevant circumstances affecting their standing.

How Arbitral Institutions Remain Popular and Overcome Problems

The second session of the event featured [Kevin Nash](#), Director General of the London Court of International Arbitration ("LCIA"); [Stefano Lobatón Ramírez](#), Legal Counsel at Madrid International Arbitration Center ("CIAM-CIAR"); [Robin Oldenstam](#), Chairperson of the board of Stockholm Chamber of Commerce ("SCC"); [Henrik Sajakorpi](#), Secretary General of The Finland Arbitration Institute ("FAI"); [Robert Stephen](#), Registrar of Dubai International Arbitration Centre ("DIAC"); [Marika Paulsson](#), Vice Chairperson of Bahrain Chamber for Dispute Resolution ("BCDR"); and [Evgeny Raschevsky](#), President of Subcommittee on Domestic Arbitration Disputes of Russian Arbitration Center ("RAC").

[Artem Doudko](#) from Osborne Clarke LLP moderated the panel with critical questions concerning how arbitral institutions can stay relevant in a shifting technological and geopolitical landscape.

Panellists first underscored the growing financial and operational burden institutions face in adopting new technologies. While digital tools and artificial intelligence ("AI") have created pathways to greater procedural efficiency, their integration demands significant investment in cybersecurity, data protection, and staff training. A recurring challenge identified was how to absorb or allocate these costs without compromising accessibility or undermining the institution's neutral standing. Concerns were also raised about the pressures inflation and case complexity place on balancing arbitrator remuneration with user fee expectations, especially under *ad valorem* costing model.

The discussion then shifted to geopolitical turbulence and its impact on institutional legitimacy. While neutrality was reaffirmed as the central core value, speakers expressed concerns over growing political scrutiny of arbitration, including treaty renegotiations that risk sidelining arbitral institutions. Participants urged stronger institutional participation in multilateral platforms, such as

UNCITRAL, OECD, and BRICS, to safeguard the global arbitration framework. A proposal was also raised to explore institution-led financial channels to maintain access for parties affected by sanctions.

With respect to maintaining continual popularity among the users, institutions primarily agreed that popularity is driven by trust, responsiveness, familiarity, and reputation. For most panellists, institutional relevance rests on service quality. The speakers highlighted how several institutions are increasingly building this through multilingual accessibility, regular institutional rules' revision cycles, and maintaining a visible and respected position within both the arbitration and business communities.

On the question of evolving dynamics between institutions, counsels, and arbitrators, an equal emphasis was placed on the role counsels play in advising parties on institutional selection, and how arbitrators need to also engage and deliver timely awards. Publishing timelines for core processes, such as arbitrator appointments or consolidation, were suggested as key measures which could align expectations and improve transparency. Soliciting structured feedback, including independent surveys, was additionally highlighted as an effective means of aligning institutional development with user priorities. For institutions to remain effective, the panel concluded that they must listen carefully to all stakeholders, especially to the end-users driving demand.

The Arbitral Institutions ‘Arms Race’—Innovate or Be Left Behind

The final session was moderated by [Professor Loukas Mistelis](#) (Queen Mary University of London) and featured [Timothy Meng](#), arbitrator at China International Economic and Trade Arbitration Commission (“CIETAC”); [Rinaldo Sali](#), Deputy Director General at Camera Arbitrale di Milano (“CAM”); [Johanna Wirth](#), Board Member of the German Arbitration Institute (“DIS”); [Christian P. Alberti](#), General Counsel at Saudi Center for Commercial Arbitration (“SCCA”); [Niamh Leinwather](#), Secretary General of Vienna International Arbitral Centre (“VIAC”); [Alex Fessas](#), Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce, International Court of Arbitration (“ICC”); and [Luis Martinez](#), Vice President at International Centre for Dispute Resolution (“ICDR”) of American Arbitration Association.

The session kicked off with wide-ranging discussions on the evolving challenges institutions face globally.

A central concern raised was the growing pressure to innovate. Institutions, often operating as non-profit entities, are increasingly expected to deliver technological and procedural advancements while preserving flexibility and fairness. The panellists throughout the session highlighted this growing tension between offering streamlined, transparent processes and managing user expectations around confidentiality and due process. Participants agreed that institutions must continue adapting while staying user-driven, maintaining credibility, and resisting the urge to become overly prescriptive. Geopolitical instability and sanctions were again identified as significant challenges which institutions continue to face. Quality control in arbitrator appointments emerged as another pressing issue.

The session also dived into the recent innovations introduced by arbitral institutions to enhance efficiency, accessibility, and user experience. One such advancement has been the adoption of expedited and simplified arbitration rules, resulting in significant cost and time savings, with a

growing share of cases resolved under these frameworks. Several panellists also highlighted how AI tools have been deployed to assist arbitrators in drafting procedural orders and summarising submissions, while chatbot interfaces help users draft clauses and file claims. Innovations also included encouraging mediation and allocating costs based on party conduct to promote procedural discipline.

The panel then shifted to a critical theme that recurred throughout the day's discussions: how institutions assess and sustain their relevance in a constantly evolving landscape. The role of working groups, community think tanks, ambassador networks, expert-led studies and internal evaluations was highlighted, which has helped institutions gather direct feedback and regional insights, and tailor services to local expectations and industry needs. Across the board, emphasis was placed on service excellence, user-centric innovation, and responsiveness to both parties and arbitrators as the key enablers for driving institutional popularity.

Concluding the session, the panellists shared a common understanding: while institutions have coped in different ways to meet the continual demand for innovation, this evolution must be carefully balanced against the need to uphold procedural integrity.

Concluding Remarks

The event addressed a wide range of current challenges confronting arbitral institutions amid growing geopolitical uncertainty. It further highlighted the urgent need for innovation and strategic responses to emerging risks, including those tied to technology and AI. Above all, the discussions stressed the importance of improving user efficiency and adapting to stakeholder needs to preserve institutional integrity and credibility.

This post is part of Kluwer Arbitration Blog's coverage of [London International Disputes Week 2025](#).

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This entry was posted on Saturday, June 7th, 2025 at 11:13 am and is filed under [Arbitral Appointments](#), [Institutional Arbitration](#), [LIDW 2025](#), [UK](#)

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