

President's Message

50 Years of ASA

ABBA won the European Song Contest in Brighton, England with the song Waterloo, a skeleton of the hominid species *Australopithecus afarensis* was discovered and named Lucy and, oh, ASA was founded. Few of you will remember what happened in 1974, and that is OK. I was not at the founding meeting either. As the ASA Bulletin only started a few years later, all I know about ASA's beginnings is hearsay and therefore unreliable evidence. I will spare you that.

When people turn fifty, they often wonder if the best time of their lives is already behind them and if they should have made a different choice at some of life's crossroads. (Spoiler alert: my own experience is that life gets even better after fifty.)

What is the state of ASA at fifty? ASA is a large organisation with a global reach (more than a third of its 1000+ members are non-Swiss and come from more jurisdictions than ASA's age) and I would not dare speak for all members. To me at least, ASA seems to be in rude health: membership is growing, active participation in committees, task forces and working groups is probably at an all-time high, the quality of its conferences and publications continues to be widely recognised. So, yes, thank you for asking, all is well, I think.

But what about the future: is ASA ready for the future? This is the question we will be focusing on at the ASA Conference on 2 February 2024. As the saying goes, predictions are difficult, especially about the future. We do not claim to have particularly good relations with the gods of fate. Crystal balls tell us nothing. We have to try anyway.

Some issues are already emerging and are likely to keep ASA busy for some time to come:

- Users are demanding more efficient, less costly procedures (at least until they are on the receiving end of a troublesome claim).
- States are having second thoughts about investor-state arbitration, and the backlash is already spilling over into commercial arbitration.
- States and users generally are also looking more closely at allegations of corruption and bias by arbitrators.

- There is a growing tension between traditional confidentiality and trust in the process on the one hand and calls for greater transparency on the other.
- Business is moving east, and arbitration is following, with Swiss arbitration practitioners increasingly adapting to changing circumstances.
- Last but not least, renewed geopolitical tensions will affect the popularity of various arbitration venues and may allow Switzerland to build on its popularity as a neutral country during the Cold War.

If the answers are not to be found in a crystal ball, they are probably not to be found in a box either. We will have to think outside the box. On 2 February, ASA will provide a platform for some of those who might be able to make us think out of the box. We will hear from a political commentator, public international law specialists, users, and also from the younger generation who will have to face the future the most.

I do not know if ASA is ready for the future. I do know, however, that the members of ASA are ready and willing to tackle whatever the gods of fate decide to bestow upon international arbitration.

In the meantime, we will be celebrating fifty years of ASA with a Swiss Arbitration Summit wrapped around the ASA Conference and an ASA Gala Dinner on 1 February with very special guests (no spoiler alert here – come and see for yourself). This unique Summit will showcase Swiss arbitration in a variety of ways, culminating in a “snowcase” on the Swiss slopes, no less.

Don't miss it.

FELIX DASSER

SAVE THE DATES

Swiss Arbitration Summit 2024, Geneva, Switzerland

31 January – 4 February

Shaping the Future of Arbitration Together

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Swiss Arbitration Association (ASA), we are delighted to announce the Swiss Arbitration Summit, a five-day event set to take place alongside the ASA and Swiss Arbitration Centre Winter Conferences from 31 January to 4 February 2024 in Geneva.

In the world of international arbitration, Switzerland has always been a trusted hub for resolving disputes. Today, we are thrilled to announce a significant evolution in our commitment to the field with the introduction of the **Swiss Arbitration Summit**.

The Swiss Arbitration Summit is more than just a conference. It is a comprehensive, five-day event designed to shape the future of arbitration in collaboration with arbitration professionals from around the world. We are expanding our horizons to provide a platform that not only promotes Switzerland as a seat for international arbitration but also showcases the dynamic Swiss arbitration community and attracts global practitioners to our beautiful country.

ASA General Meeting, Bern, 27 September 2024

For more information see www.swissarbitration.org