

QATAR LAW FORUM¹

The Qatar Law Forum (see "Current Issues" (2009) 83 ALJ143-144) was held in Doha, Qatar from 28 May to 1 June, 2009. The principal topic of the Forum was the global commitment to the Rule of Law, which given the Forum's location gave a global, as well as an Islamic, context.

The delegates included some of the leaders of the global legal community, senior Judges from every continent, including thirteen serving Chief Justices, the President-elect of the UK Supreme Court, the Presidents of the European Court of Human Rights and International Court of Justice, as well as the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, leading central bankers, regulators and General Counsel, HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Ministers from the Government of Qatar, distinguished academics from universities in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, and Asia, eminent international arbitrators, mediators and senior legal practitioners from around the world and Presidents of Bar Associations and Law Societies from 15 different jurisdictions.

[<http://qatarlawforum.com/en/qlf-participants> viewed 23 June, 2009].

Initial presentations were given by Co-convenors of the Forum, Lord Woolf of Barnes and Sir William Blair, and a significant keynote address by Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers (President-elect of the new Supreme Court of the U.K.). Lord Phillips' address pointed the way to a new world order based on the rule of law. As his Lordship stated: "There are only two ways in which these tensions (between different religions and ideologies and those resulting from stresses placed on the planet by global warming) will be resolved. One is war and the other is law". [His Lordship's paper is available at <http://qatarlawforum.com/en/qlf-documents> viewed 23 June, 2009].

The Chief Justices of India (KG Balakrishnan CJ), South Africa (P.N. Langa CJ), and New Zealand (Dame Sian Elias CJ), as well those of Hong Kong (Kwok Nang Li CJ), Singapore (Sek Keong Chan CJ), and Uganda (Odoki CJ) participated in an enthralling panel discussion "Justice in the 21st century: The challenge of globalisation".

Among the eminent Australians to attend the Forum were Chief Justice James Spigelman of New South Wales, Justice Ronald Sackville AO QC, as well as ABA President Tom Bathurst

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QC, and Glenn Ferguson, President Elect of the Law Council of Australia and present President of LAWASIA.

Justice Sackville is a member of the newly established QFC (Qatar Financial Centre) Civil and Commercial Court in Qatar.

A thought provoking specialty session was given on "the Rule of law Today" facilitated by Lord Falconer with erudite contributions from, among others, Meng Meng Wong SC of Wong Partnership, Singapore, and Chief Justice Spigelman. Meng Meng opined that the rule of law did not just appear but was built on the necessary precondition of 'full stomachs'! This session was followed by a visit to the magnificent Islamic Museum of Art located on the Doha Corniche, which houses an exquisite collection of Islamic Art and was designed by Mr Pei who previously worked on the Louvre Pyramid.

There were interesting sessions on Shari'ah and Legal Reform in the Arab World and on Law and Women around the globe including in an Islamic context.

A session about the role of International Judicial Bodies in administering the Rule of Law was given by the President of the International Court of Justice, Judge Hisahsi Owada, the President of the European Court of Human Rights (Jean-Paul Costa J) and Luis Moreo-O'Campo, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Judge Owada was previously a Japanese diplomat and academic and Moreo-O'Campo, an Argentine lawyer and first prosecutor of the ICC who has opened investigations into situations in Northern Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Darfur. [Mr Moreo-O'Campo's paper is also available at <http://qatarlawforum.com/en/qlf-documents> viewed 23 June, 2009].

There was a brilliant session entitled "In a Time of Financial Stress: Regulatory Law and the Credit Crunch" with thought provoking contributions by among others, Thomas C Baxter Jr, General Counsel and Exec Vice Pres of Federal Reserve Bank of New York (who spoke about his 'Lehman Brothers weekend' as well as why "the Fed" decided to instigate its massive bail out) and Sadeq Sayeed, CEO of Nomura International who favoured a more *laissez-faire* approach to macro-economics. Issues discussed included to what extent should governments bail out failing businesses and provide 'government guarantees'? or should they simply let market forces do their work and allow non-performing businesses to fail (with the drastic consequences said to flow)? and whether those who caused the businesses to fail should be required to 'pay the price' and take responsibility themselves?

There was an interesting session on International Dispute Resolution: Mediation and Arbitration and the Place of Law and Economics which demonstrated to the writer that while Australian practices and procedures in this regard are first rate and as good as any, there is a great need for Australian practitioners to become engaged with legal trends and practices on a global level, and particularly in our own Asian region.

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