



**29 APRIL 2016**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL ARBITRATION ENCOURAGES A FRESH LOOK AT AFRICA**

Ahead of the upcoming 23<sup>rd</sup> International Council for Commercial Arbitration (ICCA) Congress to be held in Mauritius from 8 to 11 May 2016, the Australian Centre for International Commercial Arbitration (ACICA) hosted a panel event: 'Mauritius – The ICCA Congress and Growth in International Arbitration' on 18 April 2016.

The ICCA Congress in Mauritius next month will mark the first time in ICCA's 50-year history that the Congress will gather in Africa and demonstrates recognition of the important role that international arbitration now plays across the African continent. The evening seminar hosted by ACICA at the Australian Disputes Centre in Sydney aimed to explore the opportunities for Australian practitioners arising out of the ICCA Congress in Mauritius and growing trading relationships throughout Africa.

The prestigious panel of speakers comprised Mr Roger de Robillard, Barrister and Ambassador for ICCA 2016; His Excellency Lapologang C. Lekoa, High Commissioner for the Republic of Botswana and His Excellency Patrick Cavalot, High Commissioner for Mauritius.

Mr de Robillard gave a keynote presentation focused on the market potential for continued growth in arbitration and the opportunities available for Australian arbitration practitioners in Africa resulting from increasing international trade and investment ties with Africa and African trading partners, including China. He pointed also to favourable business conditions in the region, especially within the nations making up the Organization for the Harmonization of African Business Law (OHADA) bloc. He noted that OHADA uniform instruments have significantly enhanced legal certainty and improved trade conditions in the region. Mr de Robillard focused attention in particular on the role of Mauritius as a flourishing bilingual African jurisdiction, a party to major regional and multilateral business treaties and a track record of reliable institutions, including recourse to the English Privy Council as the ultimate Appeal Court for entities working in Africa through a Mauritius-based entity.

His Excellency Lapologang C. Lekoa, speaking on behalf of the Dean of the African Heads of State in Canberra, discussed the growing commercial opportunities available in Africa, including Botswana, highlighting the entrepreneurial spirit in Africa which has advanced its Open for Business strategy. Excellency Patrick Cavalot considered the advantages of doing business in Africa using Mauritius, with its reliable legal and business architecture, as a regional hub.



Deborah Tomkinson, **ACICA Secretary General** noted: *With an emerging economy and quality infrastructure, Mauritius is growing in importance as a financial trade and global business hub. Africa offers access to fast growing markets and unique opportunities for Australian businesses and practitioners working together with Africans to build strong commercial relationships and promote African trade into the future. We are very pleased to have been able to host this event aimed at focusing attention on Africa and what it has to offer.*

Alex Baykitch, **ACICA President** commented: *With its close proximity to the African Continent, excellent and modern services, political stability, and relatively good spread of Investment Privileged Protection Agreements, Mauritius is well placed to provide a safe platform for those wishing to invest into the region as well as India and Pakistan. The recent opening of an office by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Mauritius is reflective of its growing importance as a hub for resolution of disputes involving Africa and the region. I am looking forward to engaging particularly with my African colleagues while in Mauritius and trust that Africa will appreciate the value of Australian legal and professional services to a continent which already appreciates our achievements in the mining and energy sectors.*

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