

Kimmelman takes helm as NYIAC plans move

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Louis Kimmelman

The New York International Arbitration Centre has elected **Louis Kimmelman**, who recently retired from private practice, as its new chair as it takes advantage of the pandemic-related slump in New York real estate prices to find new premises in Manhattan.

The former co-head of international arbitration at Sidley Austin was elected by the NYIAC board at its annual meeting on 13 January. He replaces **Edna Sussman**, who chaired the centre for 2 years.

He will combine the leadership role with serving as an independent arbitrator and teaching international arbitration at Brooklyn Law School in New York.

"I am very honoured to have been selected to lead NYIAC – an organisation that has done so much to build the international arbitration community in New York and to make New York a global centre for international arbitration," says Kimmelman. "NYIAC is known around the world for its high-quality programming and thought leadership in international arbitration as well as a place for conducting arbitrations and hosting events. Edna Sussman has done an excellent job in making NYIAC a global leader. I hope to build on that record of achievement."

Kimmelman takes over at a time when NYIAC's operations have drastically changed owing to the pandemic. Following the spread of the coronavirus to the US in early 2020, NYIAC quickly moved from holding in-person arbitration and mediation hearings to holding remote, online hearings, as well as providing a platform for online conferences and events.

It has run more than 50 virtual events since the pandemic started, on topics ranging from force majeure and international transactions to the multiplicity of issues that arise in life sciences disputes. These are all available for on-demand listening from NYIAC's Audio Library.

“Despite the massive disruption caused by the pandemic, we are pleased that NYIAC has been able to continue to serve party hearing needs as well as embark on a stellar series of programmes to maintain New York's thought leadership position,” says Sussman. “We look forward to continuing our central role in the New York arbitration community as we put the pandemic behind us.”

By that time, the NYIAC may well have state-of-the-art new premises. At the end of last year, it ended its sublease of the American Arbitration Association-International Centre for Dispute Resolution's premises at 150 East 42nd Street in Midtown Manhattan and is now working with architects and brokers to find new headquarters in Manhattan.

In doing so the NYIAC is taking advantage of the current slump in the New York real estate market caused by the pandemic, explains **Rekha Rangachari**, the NYIAC's executive director. She says the new premises will be bespoke and will offer first-class facilities for conducting in-person, remote and hybrid hearings.

Rangachari adds that NYIAC “benefitted greatly” from collaborating with the AAA-ICDR in its early years. “Support is crucial for a nascent arbitral organization, both from financial sponsors and the global institutions that contribute to New York's thought leadership”, she says. “I offer my gratitude and look forward to building new opportunities with colleagues and friends as NYIAC grows and embarks on its next chapter.”

In his new role as chair, Kimmelman will be supported by a team of New York lawyers, including first vice-chair **Stephen Younger** of Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, second vice chair **Peter Sherwin** of Proskauer Rose, treasurer Greig Taylor of AlixPartners, and secretary **Rainbow Willard** of Chaffetz Lindsey.

The NYIAC has also appointed new members of the executive committee - of which Kimmelman used to be a member - including **Aldo Badini** of Winston & Strawn, **Elliot Friedman** of Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, **Martin Gusy** of K&L Gates and **David Pinsky** of Covington & Burling.

Newly elected directors include **Tai-Heng Cheng** of Sidley Austin, **Miriam Harwood** of Squire Patton Boggs, Robert Kirshenber of Greenberg Traurig, Kerri Ann Law of Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel and **Ank Santens** of White & Case.

Recent ICC and AAA-ICDR case statistics confirm the importance of US parties in international arbitration, the popularity of New York as a seat of arbitration and the frequent choice of New York law to govern cross-border contracts.

“NYIAC has become, in a stunningly short time, virtually the heart, in more ways than one, of the already well-established international arbitration community in New York,” says US arbitrator and academic **George Bermann**, co-chair of NYIAC's global advisory board. “It is of course a premier hearing centre, but what most distinguishes it from like institutions is its extraordinarily rich and diverse programming. In the fashion of its founder, the late **Judith Kaye**, the centre bursts with

energy and imagination, instilled by its inspired and talented leadership – initially of **Alexandra Dosman** and currently and hopefully for a very long time, of Rekha Rangachari – and buoyed by its law firm and individual membership. It is today frankly inconceivable that the international arbitration community of New York was for so long without it.”

In the past year, the centre has broadened its membership by adding several economic consulting firms and third-party funders, which offer different experience and expertise to the lawyer and law firm members. **Dana MacGrath**, investment manager and legal counsel at Omni Bridgeway says, “NYIAC has brought the New York arbitration community together, and through its hearing services and substantive programming has increased global recognition of New York as a seat of arbitration.”

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