

THE ELGAR COMPANION TO THE HAGUE
CONFERENCE ON PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW

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The Elgar Companion to the Hague Conference on Private International Law

Edited by

Thomas John ACI Arb

Partner, Grotius Chambers, the Netherlands

Rishi Gulati

Fellow, London School of Economics, UK

Ben Köhler

*Senior Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute for Comparative and
International Private Law, Germany*

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Contributors

María Mercedes Albornoz is a Researcher Professor at Center for Research and Teaching in Economics (Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, CIDE), located in Mexico City. Her research and teaching fields focus on Private International Law, and on the cross-roads of Technologies and Law. She specializes in international contracts, including dispute resolution, and she has been conducting research on cross-border flows of personal data. She has been involved in the study of international surrogacy arrangements, and on the protection of children born thereof. She co-operates with the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an *Ad-Honorem* External Advisor in Private International Law. In this capacity, she is a member of the HCCH's Experts' Group on Parentage / Surrogacy. María Mercedes graduated in Law at the National University of Litoral in Santa Fe, in her country of origin, Argentina. She obtained a Masters Degree in Private International Law and International Commerce Law, and a PhD in Law, both at Université de Paris II, in Paris, France. She is a member of Mexico's National System of Researchers and has given many lectures and participated in discussion panels in different countries. Moreover, she is a member of several academic associations and networks.

Nadia de Araujo is a Professor of Law in the LLM Program; and Professor of Private International Law of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RIO). Nadia is a Member of the Brazilian National Group of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague; Member of the International Academy of Comparative Law, Paris, and Fellow of the International Academy of Family Lawyer. From 2016 to 2018, Nadia was a Brazilian Delegate to the Special Commission on the HCCH Judgments Project and to the HCCH's Experts' Group on Recognition and Enforcement of Agreements in International Child Disputes. In 2007, she was also a Brazilian Delegate to the XXI Diplomatic Conference on the 2007 Child Maintenance Convention and Protocol, acting as Vice-Chairman on the II Committee on the Protocol. Nadia holds a Doctoral Degree in International Law by the University of São Paulo, Brazil and she is also a Master of Comparative Law by the George Washington University, USA.

Ronald A. Brand is the Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg University Professor of Law, John E. Murray Faculty Scholar, and Academic Director of the Center for International Legal Education at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. He has taught and lectured in many countries, and in 2011 delivered a special course on private international law at the Hague Academy of International Law. He is a former Fulbright Scholar in Belgium, a former Fellow of the Institute of Advanced Studies at the University of Bologna, a recipient of the ABA Section on International Law's Leonard A. Theberge Award in Private International Law, and a recipient of a Dr. Jur. honoris causa from the University of Augsburg. Ron was a member of the U.S. Delegation to the Special Commissions and Diplomatic Conference of the HCCH that concluded the 2005 Choice of Court Convention, and has been a member of the U.S. Delegation to the Special Commission that negotiated the 2019 Judgments Convention.

Diana Bryant. The Hon. Diana Bryant AO, QC retired as Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia on 13 October 2017 after 13 years in that role, and four years prior to that as

the inaugural Chief Federal Magistrate of the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia (now the Federal Circuit Court of Australia). Prior to her appointment to the Bench in 2000, she worked as a solicitor and barrister in Western Australia and Victoria for 23 years in the area of family law. She was made an Officer in the Order of Australia in 2012. During her period as Chief Justice she sat mainly on appeals in family law cases including many cases under the Hague Convention on the Abduction of Children. Prior to her retirement she was one of the two Hague Network Judges for Australia in relation to The Hague Children's Conventions and since retirement she has been Australia's representative and Chair of an international Working Group for The Hague Conference on Private International Law in relation to Article 13(1)(b) (the 'grave risk' defence) of the Child Abduction Convention. In 2018/19 she spent three semesters as 'Judge in Residence' at Melbourne University Law School. She is a member of the Australian Academy of Law and the American Law Institute and chaired the National Judicial College of Australia (NJCA) Planning Committee for 'Family Violence in the Court' program for the Australian judiciary and is a facilitator in the delivery of the program. In addition, she currently holds the following positions: Chair of the Board of the World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights Inc; President of the Graduate Union of the University of Melbourne Inc; Chair of the National Centre Against Bullying; Member of the International Advisory Committee for the Singapore Family Justice Courts for 2018-2020; Member of the International Association of Child Law Researchers; Member of the International Family Law Arbitration Scheme; Board member and immediate Past President of the AFCC Australian Chapter; Board member of the Australian Association of Women Judges; Fellow of the International Academy of Family Lawyers; Patron of Australian Association of Collaborative Practitioners; Member of the Victorian Bar; Honorary member of the West Australian Bar Association; as well as Life member of the Family Law Practitioners Association of Western Australia.

William Brydie-Watson is a Senior Legal Officer at the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) based in Rome. William specialises in the operation of the 2001 Cape Town Convention on International Interests in Mobile Assets and has primary responsibility for the drafting of a fourth Protocol to the Cape Town Convention on matters specific to mining, agricultural and construction equipment (the 'MAC Protocol'). Previously, he was a Legal Officer in the Private International Law section of the Australian Attorney-General's Department and worked primarily on implementation of private international law treaties in Australia. William is also a visiting lecturer at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, Hungary. Admitted to practice law by the Supreme Court of New South Wales, William has a Bachelor of Arts, a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) and a Master of Laws from the Australian National University.

Geert van Calster is full professor in the University of Leuven and visiting professor at King's College, London, Monash University, Melbourne, and American University, Washington (Brussels campus). He holds the chair *inter alia* of Private international law (PIL) at Leuven (where he also heads the relevant institute) and teaches strategic interest litigation including its PIL aspects, at Monash. Geert is a practising Member at the Belgian Bar and runs a blog on, among others, private international law issues (www.gavclaw.com).

Shivika Choudhary is an Assistant Professor at Faculty of Law, University of Delhi, New Delhi. She researches in international institutional law and human rights law. An alumna

of National Law School of India University, Bangalore specialising in International Law and Human Rights, she has been recipient of the Governor's Award in 2005 and R.P. Anand International Law Scholarship in 2014. She served as a judge of sub-divisional court before taking up her passion for academics and teaches Constitutional Law and International Law. Her recent publication includes co-authoring the chapter on operationalizing integrated water resource management in India in *Natural Resources Law: Concepts and Approaches* (Eastern Book Company, 2016). She is a doctoral candidate at the South Asian University, New Delhi.

Adeline Chong is a Professor at Singapore Management University which she joined in November 2007. She was formerly a lecturer at the School of Law, University of Nottingham. She obtained First Class Honours from the University of Birmingham and subsequently was awarded a scholarship to pursue a PhD in Nottingham. She has published in the *Law Quarterly Review*, *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, *Lloyd's Maritime and Commercial Law Quarterly* and the *Journal of Private International Law*. She is the co-author of Hill and Chong, *International Commercial Disputes: Commercial Conflict of Laws in English Courts* (Oxford, Hart, 4th edn, 2010). Her work has been cited by the Singapore and New South Wales Court of Appeals, the Singapore and New Zealand High Courts, as well as in leading texts on conflict of laws such as *Dicey, Morris and Collins on the Conflict of Laws*. She has also been invited to present papers by the British Association of Canadian Studies, British Institute of International and Comparative Law, Kyushu University and the University of Sydney. Adeline has appeared as an expert on Singapore law before a Finnish court and issued a declaration on Singapore law for a US class action.

Guido den Dekker read law at Utrecht University, specializing in corporate law and international law. He obtained his PhD (*The Law of Arms Control – International Supervision and Enforcement*, Nijhoff/Kluwer/Brill, 2001) from the University of Amsterdam. Currently, he is working as an attorney admitted at the Bar of the Supreme Court in The Hague. His practice includes acting for international organizations in The Netherlands. Guido is a member of the Advisory Committee on Issues of Public International Law (*Commissie van Advies inzake Volkenrechtelijke Vraagstukken*, CAVV), a standing advisory committee to the Dutch government and parliament.

Richard Frimston is a consultant with Russell-Cooke LLP solicitors in London. He graduated from Imperial College London, with a degree in Physics and qualified as an English solicitor in 1979 and an English Notary Public in 1995. Richard was a partner and head of private client until 2018. Richard is co-author of Sweet & Maxwell's *European Cross-Border Estate Planning* and the international sections of *Heywood & Massey* and *Jordan's Court of Protection Practice*. Richard is also co-author of a work on the EU Succession Regulation published by Sellier and Dalloz in English, French and German and on the EU Matrimonial Property Regimes Regulations published by Oxford University Press and Dalloz in English and French, and a STEP badged text published by Oxford University Press on the International Protection of Adults and the 2000 Adults Convention.

Francisco J Garcimartín Alférez is a Chair Professor of Private International Law at Universidad Autónoma of Madrid. He has represented the Spanish government as national expert in different international organizations, such as Unidroit, UNCITRAL, the HCCH or the Council of the European Union. He has published in most of the leading law journals on

different aspects of private international law and cross-border transactions. He collaborates as consultant for Linklaters SLP.

Sai Ramani Garimella is an Assistant Professor at South Asian University, New Delhi, India, an international organisation established by the regional group of the South Asian nations (SAARC). She researches in private international law and international arbitration and South Asian state practice. Her recent research includes authoring the India chapter in 'Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Judgments in Civil and Commercial Matters' (Hart Publishing, 2019) and the chapter on the 'Enforcement of Emergency Arbitrator Awards in 60 Years of the New York Convention: Key Issues and Future Challenges' (Kluwer, 2019). She is also a resource faculty at the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi, and served as a subject expert on Private International Law for the Government of India program on developing electronic lecture database resources in this knowledge domain.

Richard Garnett is a Professor of Private International Law at the University of Melbourne and regularly advises on cross-border litigation and arbitration matters. He has appeared as advocate before a number of tribunals including the High Court of Australia. Richard has written extensively in the fields of private international law and arbitration, with his work cited by leading tribunals around the world, including the International Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights, the English Court of Appeal, United States federal district courts, the Singapore Court of Appeal and Australian superior courts. Since 2004, Richard has served as expert member of the Australian Government delegation to the HCCH, to negotiate the 2005 Choice of Court Convention and most recently the 2019 Judgments Convention.

Nuria Gonzalez-Martin holds a PhD in private international law, Pablo de Olavide University, Seville, Spain. She is Professor and Senior Researcher at the Institute for Legal Research (IIJ), National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). From 2012 to 2016 she was Visiting Scholar and Visiting Fellow at Stanford Law School and CISAC –Stanford University. In 2015 she, was selected as a Weinstein JAMS International Fellow. She is the author of many publications on family law, comparative law, private international law and alternative dispute resolution. She is also external counsellor to Mexico's Foreign Affairs Ministry and a certified family mediator. Nuria is a member of a number of associations, including the International Academy of Comparative Law (IACL) and the American Association of Private International Law (ASADIP), as well as a member of several international scientific committees and participates in various Experts Groups of The Hague Conference on Private International Law and International Social Service to create a Global Network of International Family Mediation. Young Scholar Award, in Social Studies, UNAM, 2008.

Alexander Grebelsky is the Deputy Director of the HCCH Information Center at MGIMO University in Moscow, where he also holds a position of a senior lecturer at the S.N. Lebedev Department of Private International and Civil Law. He teaches international investment and commercial arbitration, transnational litigation and comparative contract law, and coaches MGIMO team at Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot. Alexander has also been involved in legal practice as a member of Moscow Bar Association since 2004 and now is the Managing Partner and Head of Dispute Resolution at Moscow Law Firm 'Grebelsky & Partners'. He is a member of the Commission on Arbitration at the Association of Russian Lawyers and reporter at the International Commercial Arbitration Court at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation. Alexander is an author and

editor of numerous books and journal articles on international arbitration and transnational civil procedure.

Rishi Gulati is an LSE Fellow in Law at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has a PHD from King's College London, Advanced Masters in Public International Law from Leiden University and a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) from the Australian National University. Rishi has taught public and private international law subjects at several leading universities, including the London School of Economics, King's College London and the University of New South Wales. He has several publications in the field of public and private international law, and is the author of *International Organisations and Access to Justice* (Cambridge University Press, 2021 forthcoming). Rishi has previously been a Judge's Associate at the Federal Court of Australia, laureate Research Fellow at the University of New South Wales, and has worked at the Australian Attorney General's Department advising and representing the Australian Government on a range of international law issues, including international commercial and trade law. He is a Barrister at the Victorian Bar, Australia. He represents clients before numerous national and international courts, as well as before arbitral tribunals.

Jan von Hein is a Professor and Director at the Institute for Comparative and Private International Law at the University of Freiburg, Germany. He is the chairman of the Second Commission of the German Council for Private International Law, a member of the Board of the International Law Association's German branch and an associate member of the International Academy of Comparative Law. He is the author of numerous books and articles on private international and comparative law which have been honoured by the Max Planck Society and the German Stock Corporation Institute.

Florian Heindler is an assistant professor at Sigmund Freud University in Vienna. He currently teaches private international law and Austrian private law. Florian holds a PhD degree in law which he obtained from University of Vienna as well as master degrees in philology and law. Apart from his work in academia, Florian is of counsel for an Austrian bank and an international law firm. Florian is a Fellow of the European Law Institute and the International Academy of the Belt and Road. In 2017, he became president of the Interdisciplinary Association of Comparative and Private International Law. In 2018, he was awarded the Petar Šarčević scholarship to pursue research at the Swiss Institute of Comparative Law.

Burkhard Hess became founding and executive director of the Max Planck Institute Luxembourg for International, European and Regulatory Procedural Law in September 2012. He studied law at the Universities of Würzburg, Lausanne and Munich and graduated in Munich in 1990. After being granted *Venia Legendi* in civil law, civil procedure, private international law, European law and public international law in 1996, he held chairs at the Universities of Tübingen and Heidelberg. He was a guest professor in Beijing, in Paris (Sorbonne) and in Georgetown, and a scholar-in-residence at the Center for Transnational Law at the New York University. He served as a part-time judge at the Court of Appeal of Karlsruhe. Professor Hess often acts as an expert and advisor to the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe and national governments. He has evaluated the European Insolvency Regulation and the Brussels I Regulation. He has also contributed to the drafting of the proposal for the Regulation on the European Attachment of Bank Accounts. He is the author of various books on German and European civil procedural law as well as

co-editor of IPRax and of *Kölner Kommentar zum Kapitalanleger-Musterverfahrensgesetz*. He is Chairman of the ILA Committee on the Protection of Privacy in Private International and Procedural Law. In March 2015, the University of Ghent awarded Professor Hess a doctor honoris causa; in May 2016, the University of Thessaloniki.

Thomas John ACI Arb is a German and Australian trained Barrister and co-founder of Grotius Chambers in the Netherlands. He specialises in international private law, with a particular focus on international commercial, investment and transactional law as well as international dispute resolution, including commercial litigation and arbitration. Thomas held positions in private practice as well as government and in the international civil service, serving as Attaché and Principal Lawyer at the HCCH, as Head of the Private International Law and Commercial Arbitration Section of the Attorney-General's Department in Australia, and as Counsel for the Federal Government of Australia. Thomas is an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (London) and holds a postgraduate degree in international commercial and sport arbitration. He teaches at the Sigmund Freud University in Vienna and is a widely published author who regularly speaks at conferences.

Ben Köhler is a Senior Research Fellow at the Max-Planck-Institute for Comparative and International Private Law in Hamburg, where he focuses on European and comparative private law and private international law. He is a PhD candidate at Saarland University and holds degrees in German and French law from Saarland University and Paul Verlaine University-Metz as well as a LLM degree from Harvard Law School.

Melissa Kucinski is the owner and founder of MK Family Law, PLLC in Washington, DC, USA. She consulted for HCCH in 2013, and teaches at the George Washington University School of Law. Her private practice focuses on complex family law cases, including mediation of domestic and international cases, consulting and providing expert testimony on international child abduction prevention, and representing children in contested custody situations. She is the author of a recent handbook on representing children in domestic and cross-jurisdictional cases. She has been instrumental in training family mediators through the American Bar Association in handling cross-border family cases, has conducted a mediation training for the Tokyo Bar Association after Japan's ratification of 1980 Child Abduction Convention, and is offering two advanced family mediation trainings in the United States in 2019. Melissa attended the HCCH's 6th Special Commission meeting on the 1980 Child Abduction and 1996 Child Protection Conventions as a member of the US Delegation, and its 7th Special Commission meeting as a member of International Social Service's Delegation. She also acted as Chair of a working group for International Social Service that designed a global mediator network to ensure more collaboration in the field of cross-border family mediation.

Claudia Lima Marques is a Full Professor of Private International Law at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and the Director of the CDEA-Center for European and German Studies, from DAAD, at UFRGS-PUCRS. She holds a PhD from Heidelberg University, a LLM from Tübingen and a Diploma in European Integration (Saare). She is the Chair of the Committee on International Protection of Consumers, ILA, London and the Director of the International Association of Consumer Law (Brussels). Claudia is the former President of ASADIP (Paraguay) and Brasilcon (Brazilian Institute of Consumer Law and Policy, Brasilia). She was General-Rapporteur of the Reform of the Brazilian Consumer Code and has been a consultant since 1991 to Mercosur, OAS, the World Bank and

the Brazilian Ministry of Justice on consumer law matters and in Private International Law Issues. She is an expert on the negotiation of an Instrument to protect international tourists as consumer at the HCCH. She holds doctor honoris causa titles from the University of Giessen, Germany, and the University of Savoie Mont Blanc, France. She is an editor and author of important books in consumer law and has written numerous articles and chapters on contracts, on conflicts of laws and consumer law issues published in Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Panamá, Canada, USA, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, UK, Italy, China and Japan.

José Antonio Moreno Rodríguez holds an LLM from Harvard (1993). He founded Altra Legal, a leading Paraguayan law firm in Arbitration, Commercial and Financial Law, among other areas. Moreover, he is a Professor and Visiting Professor of several universities, among them, Heidelberg and Paris II, and the President of CEDEP, a Paraguayan foundation linked to leading international organization and major universities. Throughout his career, José Antonio's expertise in international private law is marked by his involvement in the development of this area of law. For example, he was a member of the Working Group for the development of the 2015 Choice of Law Principles and of the Inter-American Juridical Committee of the Organization of American States, where he also served as reporter for its Guide on International Contracts. He was a drafter of the Paraguayan Law on International Contracts and acted as member of the Governing Council of UNIDROIT and Chair of its Working Group on Agricultural Land and Investment Contracts. Moreover, he was a member of Annulment Committees at ICSID, acted as arbitrator and is a former member of the ICC Court of Arbitration. He represented Paraguay at the 39th Session of UNCITRAL, which approved amendments to the Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration and served as President of the American Association of Private International Law. He is widely published and co-author of several books and legal articles published in Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Uruguay, Perú, Mexico, the United States, England, Italy, China, and Spain. Professor and Visiting Professor of several universities, among them, Heidelberg and Paris II. He is the President of CEDEP, a Paraguayan foundation linked to leading international organization and major universities.

Guy Morton is an English solicitor and was, until his retirement, a partner in Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP. He was Senior Partner of the firm from 2006 to 2010 and for many years before that he led the firm's financial services group. He represented the United Kingdom in the development of the Hague Securities Convention and the Geneva Securities Convention, in each case serving also as a member of the Drafting Committee. He also served on the European Commission's Forum Group on Collateral, assisting with the preparation of the Financial Collateral Directive, and was a member of the Commission's Legal Certainty Group on EU Clearing and Settlement. He is a former member of the Financial Markets Law Committee.

Horatia Muir Watt is Professor at the law School, Sciences-po Paris, where she currently co-directs the speciality 'Global Governance Studies' within the Master of Economic Law. She teaches and publishes in the field of private international law and comparative law, where she develops critical and interdisciplinary approaches. She was elected in 2013 to the Institute of International Law and in 2018 to the Institut Universitaire de France. She is Director of the *Revue critique de droit international privé* and on the editorial board of various international law reviews or journals (*Journal of Private International Law*, *European Review of Contract*

Law, Transnational legal Theory) and co-editor of various collections: *International Studies in the Theory of Private Law* (Hart, Kluwer, Dalloz), *Private law in European Context* (Kluwer Law International) and '*A droit ouvert*' chez Dalloz (with Antoine Lyon-Caen). Her books include *Aspects économiques de droit international privé* (Recueil des Cours de l'Académie de droit international de la Haye, t307, 2005); *Droit international privé*, PUF Thémis, 4th edn 2017, co-authored with Dominique Bureau; a co-edited volume (with D. Fernandez Arroyo) published by Oxford University Press in 2014, *Private International Law as Global Governance; Private International Law and the Application of Public Law*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Research Series (direction), 2 vol, 2016 ; *Discours sur les méthodes du droit international privé: des formes juridiques de l'inter-alterite*, RCADI La Haye (2017) and pocket edition (2018); with co-editors (Lucia Bizikova et al.) *Global Private international law: adjudication without frontiers*, 2019, with a forthcoming French edition, *Le droit international privé dans le tournant global*, Pédone 2020.

Yuko Nishitani is Professor of International Private and Business Law at Kyoto University in Japan since 2015. Prior to this, she held a chair at Tohoku University and Kyushu University. She has been a Visiting Professor at different universities, including Duke University, Université Catholique de Louvain, Tel Aviv, Zurich and Brescia Universities. She was a Director of Studies (2004) and Lecturer (2011) at the Hague Academy of International Law and is a Member of its Curatorium since 2017. After completing her studies in Japan, she received a PhD from the University of Heidelberg (1998). She further researched in Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland and the U.S., and also worked on secondment at the HCCH. She has been a member of several Legislative Committees in Japan and represented the Japanese Government in several HCCH projects, *i.e.*, the development of the 2015 Principles on Choice of Law, the Judgments Project, and the Parentage and Surrogacy Project. Her area of interests is private international law, international business law, international litigation, comparative law, and family and succession law. She is currently doing research on globalization and legal pluralism, uniform law, international dispute resolution and cultural identity in private international family law.

Ifeoma Obi is a PhD candidate at the Australian Maritime College, University of Tasmania. Prior to her candidature, she was in private legal practice in Nigeria for over ten years, having obtained her Bachelor of Laws with honours from the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt, Nigeria in 2004 and called to the Nigerian Bar in November, 2006. She obtained a master's in law from the University of Lagos, Nigeria in 2012. Her practice areas span corporate/commercial law, oil and gas, intellectual property maritime law and dispute resolution. She is proficient in contract negotiation and management and have been involved in commercial and dispute resolution negotiations in Nigeria, England, United States, United Arab Emirates and Greece. She has worked as the legal liaison for different projects include projects for chartering, operations and management of FPSOs, Jack Up Rigs and Land Rigs. She has contributed in international publications such as Euromoney Yearbooks and World Bank/IFC Doing Business, 2013. Her current research interest is in maritime law and private international law with the topic, 'Bringing an end to Problems of Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Maritime Lien: From Comparative Private International Law Perspective'.

Pontian N. Okoli lectures in private international law and private international commercial law at the University of Stirling, Scotland, UK. He obtained his PhD and LLM from the University of Dundee, Scotland, where his teaching included private international Law of business transactions. He is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Having worked as Barrister and Solicitor in two Nigerian law firms and as In-house counsel in a leading Nigerian financial institution, a great part of Pontian's law practice and experience concern international commercial/corporate dealings and investment risks – representing clients based in various jurisdictions including European countries and the United States. In addition to private international law, his research interests and publications include topics on the intersections between international business transactions and access to justice, and regional integration. His publications include *Promoting Foreign Judgments: Lessons in Legal Convergence from South Africa and Nigeria* (2019).

Richard Frimpong Oppong is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia, Canada and a Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences. He holds degrees from the University of Ghana, University of Cambridge, Harvard Law School, and the University of British Columbia. He completed his post-doctoral research at the Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University. In 2012, Richard held the post of Director of Studies (Private International Law) at The Hague Academy of International Law. He was a member of the Working Group of HCCH that developed 2015 Choice of Law Principles. His principal research interests are in private international law, regional economic integration and international dispute settlement, with a special focus on Africa. He has published widely on these subjects. His major publications include major publications include: *Private International Law in Ghana* (2020); *Private International Law in Nigeria* (2020); *The Government of Ghana and International Arbitration* (2017); *Private International Law in Commonwealth Africa* (2013).

Lukas Rass-Masson is a researcher and lecturer in law specialised in private international law, family law and European law. After previous positions at University Paris II, Panthéon-Assas (as PhD researcher and assistant lecturer) and University Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne (as assistant professor, Maître de conférences), he was appointed professor (Professeur des Universités) at University Toulouse 1 Capitole in 2017. In June 2018, he became Director of the European School of Law Toulouse (ESLToulouse). Previous responsibilities include a position as legal officer at the Permanent Bureau of the HCCH and working as independent expert for the European Union (Commission and Parliament). After an award-winning doctoral dissertation on 'the Foundations of European Private International Family Law', his current research focuses on the methodology of European private law and global private international law, especially in an Asian-European perspective. Lukas defended in 2015 his doctoral dissertation on 'the Foundations of European Private International Family Law' (at the University Paris II, Panthéon-Assas). He has been recruited in 2016 by the University Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne as Assistant Professor (Maître de conférences), member of the Sorbonne Law School. He is fluent in German, English and French.

Vincent Richard wrote his PhD dissertation on 'Default judgments in the European area of freedom, liberty, security and justice' under the joint supervision of Professor Gilles Cuniberti (University Luxembourg) and Professor Loïc Cadet (University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne). He holds a Bachelor degree from the University of Angers (France) and studied in Poland

(Uniwersytet Mikolaja Kopernika in Torun) and Luxembourg (University of Luxembourg). He completed a master degree in Private International Law and International Commercial Law from the University Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas. His research interests include national and European procedural law, private international law, consumer law and judicial organisation.

Nieve Rubaja is a Professor for Private International Law at the University of Buenos Aires. She has been teaching in the field of Private International Law since 1999 and in Family International Law since 2010. She has also been a visiting lecturer at several national and international universities both in undergraduate and graduate courses. She is a researcher at the University of Buenos Aires. She holds a postgraduate degree in Family Law from the University of Buenos Aires (2004) and is currently a candidate to the PhD in Private International Law at the same School of Law. Apart from teaching, she has extensively published in Family International Law field. In 2012, her first book *Private International Family Law, from the Argentinean Legal System Perspective* was published by Thomson Reuters publishing house. Nieve is a member of the 'Experts' Group on Recognition and Enforcement of Voluntary Cross-Border Agreements in International Child Disputes' and she is the Argentinean representative at the 'Experts' Group on Parentage' held by the HCCH. She is a Latin American correspondent for INCADAT. She is a member of the American Association of Private International Law (ASADIP).

Giesela Rühl is a Professor of Private International Law at the University of Jena (Germany) and a Director of its Center for European Studies (CEuS). Prior to joining the University of Jena Giesela was a Fellow of the German National Science Foundation, a Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence (Italy), a Senior Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law in Hamburg (Germany) and a Joseph Story Research Fellow at the Harvard Law School in Cambridge (USA). In October 2020 Giesela will join the Faculty of Law at Humboldt-University of Berlin (Germany). Giesela has published widely on various aspects of private international law and co-edited among others, the four-volume *Encyclopedia of Private International Law* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017). Her work has been honoured by the Max Planck Society, the German National Academy of Sciences as well as the American Society of International Law. Giesela is a member of various academic institutions, among them the International Academy of Comparative Law, the European Academy of Sciences and Arts and the European Law Institute. In addition, she is one of the founders as well as the first Secretary General of the European Association of Private International Law (EAPIL). She holds both German State Examinations, a Master of Laws from the University of California, Berkeley (USA) as well as a Doctorate and a Post-Doctorate from the University of Hamburg (Germany).

Sara Sánchez Fernández is an Assistant Professor at IE University (Madrid) where she teaches Conflict of Laws and Commercial Law both at Undergraduate and LLM programs. Her fields of expertise are corporate law, capital markets and insolvency law. Prior to joining IE University, Sara was a practicing lawyer at Uría Menéndez, where she specialised in IPOs and worked as corporate governance and company law counsel for Spanish listed companies. She has also been a researcher at Universidad Autónoma, where she obtained her PhD.

Philip Santucci is a barrister at the New South Wales Bar, Australia. He has an interest in private international law and appears in both public law and commercial disputes as well as international arbitrations.

Poomintr Sooksripaisarnkit is a Lecturer in Maritime Law within the Australian Maritime College, University of Tasmania. His research interests lie in insurance law (marine and non-marine); private aspects of admiralty and maritime law (excluding the law of the sea and regulations); carriage of goods by sea; international sale of goods carried by sea; commercial conflict of laws (private international law); and aspects of international arbitration (pertinent to conflict of laws). He is an accredited mediator by both the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) and the Hong Kong Mediation Accreditation Association Limited (HKMAAL). He is also a Member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIArb) and also a Supporting Member of the London Maritime Arbitrators Association (LMAA). His recent publications include a chapter contribution on ‘Emergency Arbitration Awards: Addressing Enforceability Concerns Through National Law and The New York Convention’ in Katia Fach Gómez and Ana Mercedes López Rodríguez (eds), *60 Years of the New York Convention: Key Issues and Future Challenges* (Wolters Kluwer 2019) (co-authored with Sai Ramani Garimella) and an edited collection *China’s One Belt One Road Initiative and Private International Law* (Routledge 2018). He has involved in the Foreign Judgments Project of the Asian Business Law Institute (ABLI).

Tatiana Cardoso Squeff is a tenure-track professor of the Graduate and Undergraduate program in Laws and International Relations of the Federal University of Uberlândia/MG. She is an Expert to the HCCH, appointed by the Brazilian Ministry of Justice, and the National Secretary on Consumer Issues – SENACON. She holds a PhD in International Law at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul – UFRGS, with a study period at Ottawa University. She holds a LLM from the Vale do Rio dos Sinos University – UNISINOS, with a CAPES scholarship, with a study period at the University of Toronto, with a DFAIT scholarship. She holds post-graduate degrees in the English Language from Unilasalle (2008), in International Law from UFRGS – PPGD and in Contemporary International Relations from UFRGS – PPGEEI.

Dan Jerker B. Svantesson is a Professor based at the Faculty of Law, Bond University (Australia). He is an Associated Researcher at the Swedish Law & Informatics Research Institute, Stockholm University (Sweden) and a Visiting Professor at Masaryk University (Czech Republic). Professor Svantesson is a member of the Editorial Boards for several international journals. He held an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship (2012–2016) and was awarded the Vice Chancellor’s Award for Research Excellence in 2016. He has been identified as the field leader in ‘Technology Law’ in The Australian RESEARCH magazine two years in a row (2018 and 2019).

Paul Vlas became Advocate General at the Supreme Court (*Hoge Raad*) of the Netherlands in 2010. Since 1987 he is also professor of private international law and comparative law at the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, where he was dean of the Law Faculty from 1999 until 2005. He studied law at Leiden University, where he defended his PhD thesis (‘Corporations in Private International Law’) in 1982. After his studies he became lecturer at Leiden University and was, until 1987, a company lawyer. He became member of the Dutch Standing Government Committee on Private International Law in 1993 and chairs the Committee since 2011. Since 1995 he is involved in the work of the HCCH. He participated in Special Commissions and was delegate to the Twentieth Session in 2005. He is Editor-in Chief of the *Netherlands*

International Law Review and chairs the board of editors of the weekly law journal *Weekblad voor Privaatrecht, Notariaat en Registratie* (WPNR). He is also editor of the *Nederlandse Jurisprudentie* (NJ), which is a weekly periodical for publication of the decisions of the Dutch Supreme Court. Paul has written more than 400 publications (books, book contributions, articles and case notes) regarding many issues of private international law.

Christopher Ward SC is a senior counsel at the New South Wales Bar, Australia. He is a specialist in public and private international law and works globally in fields including international commercial transactions, oil, gas and energy, conflict of laws, aviation, boundary disputes, immunities and sanctions, the law of the sea, and human rights. He is an Adjunct Professor of Law at the Australian National University, and is the President of the International Law Association.

Patrick Wautelet is a Professor at the Law School of Université de Liège (Belgium), where his teaching and scholarship focuses on legal aspects of cross-border situations with a strong emphasis on cross-border family relationships and nationality law. In recent years, his scholarship has focused mainly on family issues (including family assets) arising out of the increasing cross-border mobility of citizens.

Philippa Webb is Professor of Public International Law at King's College London. She joined the Law School in 2012 after a decade in international legal practice. She has served as the Special Assistant to President Higgins of the International Court of Justice (2006–9), the Judicial Clerk to Judges Higgins and Owada (2004–5) and Associate Legal Adviser at the International Criminal Court (2005–6). Professor Webb served on the International Advisory Panel for the American Law Institute's project Restatement Fourth, Foreign Relations Law of the United States. She is a Board Member of the European Society of International Law and on the editorial boards of the *Journal of International Criminal Justice* and the *Leiden Journal of International Law*. She is the co-author of *Oppenheim's International Law: The United Nations* (Oxford University Press, 2017) (with Dame Rosalyn Higgins GBE QC, Dapo Akande, Sandesh Sivakumaran, and James Sloan), which was awarded the ASIL Certificate of Merit 2019 for High Technical Craftmanship and Utility to Practitioners and Scholars. Her other publications include *The Law of State Immunity* (Oxford University Press, 2015, with Lady Hazel Fox QC), *International Judicial Integration and Fragmentation* (Oxford University Press, 2013, paperback 2016), and *The Genocide Convention: The Travaux Préparatoires* (Martinus Nijhoff, 2008, with Hiram Abtahi). She is a barrister at Twenty Essex and appears as counsel in international and domestic courts.

Peter Zablud AM, RFD is an Australian lawyer, notary and academic. He has written extensively about common law notarial practice. His books include the authoritative reference work *Principles of Notarial Practice*, now in its second edition. Peter is a Professor at Victoria University, Melbourne, and the Director of Notarial Studies. He also conducts seminars, workshops and masterclasses for practising and prospective notaries internationally and throughout Australia. He regularly presents papers on the authentication of documents for cross-border purposes at HCCH sponsored international events and conferences. He holds a Reserve Force Decoration (RFD) and was awarded the National Medal for service as an officer in the Australian Army Reserve. In 2017, Peter was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in recognition of his significant service to the law and to legal standards and education particularly in the field of notarial studies.

Foreword I

Christophe Bernasconi

We live in a world of private international law. Increases in cross-border movement, transnational commerce and the rise of technology have all highlighted the importance of the discipline and led to an increased awareness of its relevance. As these developments occur, and individuals are faced with challenges that operate across legal systems, the work of the HCCH is more relevant than ever.

The collection of essays found in this compilation reflects the diversity and scale of the HCCH. It provides a comprehensive overview of the Organisation, its journey across the past century, and the Conventions and other instruments that it has produced. The authors are academics, judicial officers, and practitioners from across the world, all of whom have shown great interest in the HCCH and have directly or indirectly contributed to the development of its normative work. I am grateful for their thought-provoking contributions. These experts are merely a sample (albeit an impressive one) of the many great minds who have engaged with the HCCH across its tenure, beginning with Tobias Asser in 1893.

While I defer all substantive matters to the rich content you will find in the following pages, there are a number of key themes I wish to highlight, reflecting the history and personality of the HCCH. It tells a story of resilience and adaptability as it provides a multilateral platform focused on ‘connecting, protecting, cooperating’.

The HCCH is dynamic. It has changed its operating methods to accommodate international developments. Over time, we have strengthened good governance, including restructuring internal bodies and their rules of operation. The key vehicle for setting the Organisation’s work programme and its policy is now the Member-driven Council on General Affairs and Policy, which meets every year. The HCCH also swiftly managed to amend its Statute enabling Regional Economic Integration Organisations to become Members of the Organisation; as a result, in 2007, the European Union became a Member of the HCCH (in addition to its own Member States).

The HCCH is resilient. The history behind the 2005 Choice of Court Convention, 2019 Judgments Convention and the ongoing jurisdiction project show both the challenges of negotiating international agreements, and the rewards. What began as a project with a wide scope was eventually narrowed and broken into separate instruments. To continue to produce meaningful, practical and consensus-based outcomes while facing renewed challenges in developing its normative work has necessitated perseverance at each obstacle.

The HCCH is adaptable. Across this compilation, there are stories of communication and innovation in an effort to embrace advancements in law and technology. Networks have been created, such as the International Hague Network of Judges, in response to jurisdictions having no existing formal mechanism to communicate. This is in addition to regular post-Convention activities such as Special Commissions on the Practical Operation of Conventions, a format which was first established in 1977 to consider the 1965 Service Convention. These fora – unique to the HCCH – hold crucial importance to the ongoing success of its instruments by contributing to uniform interpretation and enabling Conventions to operate in a changing environment. The publication of Guides to Good Practice and Practical Handbooks enable different jurisdictions to adopt common practices while accounting for domestic limitations. Finally, the ongoing role of Central and Competent Authorities, a mechanism central to

a number of Conventions, sees individuals numbering into the thousands become part of the work of the HCCH every day.

The HCCH is effective. It has shown skill in its nuanced drafting processes, both with bilingual drafting and in conceptualising difficult legal concepts into neutral language to ensure Conventions are able to have universal application. HCCH Conventions have real-life practical effect for individuals. The 1961 Apostille Convention assists millions of people around the world every year, and continues to attract signatories. Its Contracting Parties now well exceed 100, a milestone also passed by the 1980 Child Abduction and 1993 Adoption Conventions. More broadly, there are over 930 instances of an HCCH Convention being brought into force by a Contracting Party, yet more than 28,500 agreements would be required to replicate this network at the bilateral level. The benefits of multilateralism thus speak for themselves, saving resources at an international, consular, and individual level. It is not unreasonable to expect this to span further as we progress through the twenty-first century. Finally, new systems have been created in response to new technologies. Conventions that were drafted decades ago, in a wholly paper-based world, have employed new online methods, such as the e-APP (the electronic Apostille Programme), iSupport (an electronic case management and secure communication system for the cross-border recovery of maintenance obligations) and INCADAT (the International Child Abduction Database).

Of course, we continue to face challenges which are inherent to an international body. Traditional understandings of private international law are being challenged by new technologies, such as distributed ledger technology, which is decentralised and delocalised. Unique challenges triggered by catastrophe – such as natural disasters or global pandemics – have implications on both everyday life and the ability to access legal and administrative processes. In these circumstances, both the normative and non-normative work of the HCCH has proven helpful in assisting persons at risk and in need. The HCCH is on the front foot, and will continue to respond to challenges, providing a forum for the future.

As an organisation, we continue to go from strength to strength. Over the last decade – at the time of writing – the HCCH witnessed 16 new Member States and over 250 instances in which a Contracting Party joined an HCCH Convention. We have celebrated milestones including the 125th Anniversary of the HCCH in 2018, and the conclusion of the 2019 Judgments Convention, a potential gamechanger for private international law. In line with broader strategic goals, we now have two Regional Offices: the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, opened in 2005, and the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, opened in 2012. These are in addition to many more meetings, publications, workshops and anniversaries, which are far too many to mention in writing.

Our work encompasses local and national implementation, civil and common law systems, and individuals that come from socially, ethnically, and economically diverse backgrounds. We continue to balance priorities and remain proactive, creating ambitious goals, acknowledging shortfalls and building to be better.

I would like to extend my thanks to the authors for their time and expertise, and the editors at Elgar for their assistance. I would also like to thank Thomas John, my former Attaché at the HCCH, for his organisation and commitment to this project which have been invaluable to its completion.

The HCCH seeks to better the lives of individuals in a globalised world, a goal that remains more vital today than ever. And while there is still a long way to go to establish the HCCH as a truly global and fully inclusive organisation, in this piece of work, you will find the story

of what it has achieved this in the past, and how it will continue to do so in the future. This companion will no doubt help increase the visibility of the work of the HCCH, and provide a useful resource about the Organisation and its role in the future development of private international law.

Christophe Bernasconi
Secretary General



HCCH

Connecter Protéger Coopérer Depuis 1893
Connecting Protecting Cooperating Since 1893

Foreword II

Lord Collins

This fine *Companion* celebrates more than 125 years of the existence of the Hague Conference and its great achievements in the field of private international law.

Scholars and practitioners know of the widespread acceptance, and enormous influence, of the Hague Conventions on, in particular, child abduction, adoption, legalisation and service of documents, and cross-border taking of evidence. The more recent choice of court and judgments conventions will eventually have a great influence on international commerce.

In this volume there are 35 contributions from foremost experts around the world. They deal with the history of the HCCH, its role in an increasingly globalised world, and its role in the future. Especially valuable is the critical analysis of the existing HCCH instruments.

Although it is invidious to single out particular contributions, to take a few examples of the fine scholarship on display, Professor Horatia Muir Watt of Sciences-Po Law School shows how the HCCH has kept pace with modern theories of private international law; Professor Ronald Brand of the University of Pittsburgh Law School discusses the history of the 2005 Choice of Court Convention and the major issues considered during the course of negotiations and resolved in the text; Professor Richard Garnett of Melbourne University Law School contributes a detailed discussion of the recent Judgments Convention, which is likely to achieve greater success than previous efforts in this field; Guy Morton, a very prominent City of London solicitor, discusses the Hague Securities Convention; and Professor Philippa Webb, of King's College London School of Law, contributes a comparative study of *forum non conveniens*.

All scholars in this field will need to take notice of this comprehensive work, and practitioners in ever-increasing international litigation will find much that is of great practical importance.

Lord Collins of Mapesbury LLD, FBA (Lawrence Collins)
Former Justice, UK Supreme Court

Editors' introduction to the Elgar companion to the HCCH

Founded in 1893, the HCCH is the oldest international organisation in The Hague. For more than 125 years, the Organisation has been, and continues to be, a shining example of the tangible benefits effective and successful multilateralism can yield for people and business around the globe. With this Companion, we set out to provide a unique, unprecedented and comprehensive insight into the HCCH, compiling in one source accessible and thought-provoking contributions on the Organisation's work. Written by some of the world's leading private international lawyers, all of whom have directly or indirectly worked closely with the HCCH, the result is a collection of innovative and reflective contributions, which we believe will inform shaping the future of this important global institution.

In the first Foreword to this Companion, the current Secretary General of the HCCH, Dr Christophe Bernasconi, elegantly captured the value of the contributions for the future development of private international law. For the Secretary General to make this observation is significant: the HCCH is the premier international organisation mandated to help achieve global consensus on the private international law rules regulating cross-border personal and commercial relationships. We are grateful for his support of this project.

STRUCTURE OF THE COMPANION

Given the broad coverage of this Companion, it is helpful to provide the reader with some orientation.

First, we approached private international law classically, that is by understanding the subject matter with reference to its three dimensions: jurisdiction, applicable law, and the recognition and enforcement of foreign judgments. But, as the contributions in this work show, since its inception, and in particular since the 1980s, the HCCH has helped to reach international consensus concerning a further, a 'fourth' dimension of private international law: cross-border legal cooperation. In line with this development, and with our firm belief that such cooperation is crucial to the private international law of the twenty-first century, this Companion has adopted a strong focus on cross-border legal cooperation, including by an increased use of technology. We now consider this decision fortuitous as a global pandemic is testing the domestic and international justice sector like never before, bringing into sharp focus the often non-existing or still arcane methods prevalent especially in the area of cross-border legal cooperation.

The Companion organises its 35 chapters in three Parts. Part I consists of contributions that trace the development of the HCCH from its inception in 1893 until the present day, with the organisation now becoming increasingly global. The initial Chapters specifically concern the history of the HCCH; its institutional setting, especially in terms of the HCCH's privileges and immunities; as well as a contribution on the relationship between the HCCH, and the other two international organisations dealing with international private law issues, i.e., UNCITRAL and UNIDROIT, often also referred to as the HCCH's 'Sister Organisations'.

Another set of Chapters demonstrate how the HCCH is evolving from an organisation whose membership was historically European-based but is nowadays becoming increasingly global. The HCCH currently has 85 Members, with its membership comprising of 84 States and the EU. Perhaps other Regional Economic Integration Organisations may also become members one day, and this should be encouraged. Remarkably, since the turn of the century, the HCCH has added 38 New Members (or 45 per cent of its current membership). The increased membership consists of five South American States, two from North America, one in Oceania, fourteen in Asia, eleven in Europe and five in Africa.¹ This Section of the Companion considers this expanded reach of the HCCH, and consists of thoughtful contributions on the organisation's work in Latin America and the Caribbean; Africa; and in the Asia Pacific. The Chapters also reflect on the work of the HCCH's Regional Offices, namely, the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) which is based in Hong Kong and commenced its work in 2012; as well as the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean operating out of Buenos Aires since 2005.

The final Section in Part I contains stimulating contributions concerning some of the contemporary philosophical dimensions of private international law as shaped by globalisation, and the ways in which the HCCH can be understood in this context; the role the organisation can play in shaping private international law into the future; considering whether the 2015 Choice of Law Principles establish a good framework for regulatory competition in contract law; what role can the HCCH play in further strengthening legal cooperation across borders; and the concept of *public order* including its relationship with mandatory law.

Part II of the Companion concerns contributions on existing HCCH instruments. It traces the evolution, implementation, and effectiveness of each of those instruments, and looks forward in terms of how improvements may be achieved. Here, the task was not only to provide a record of the organisation's successes and achievements, but also a critical analysis of its current work. The authors canvas the traditional tripartite of private international law, including forum selection, choice of law and the recognition and enforcement of judgments. In addition, they also provide their thoughts on the fourth dimension of private international law, i.e. cross-border legal cooperation, tracing the pioneering, as well as championing, role of the HCCH in this regard, resulting in cooperation being a quintessential feature, in particular of more modern conventions, developed and adopted by the HCCH.

The first Section of this Part addresses HCCH instruments in the family law sphere. Contributions include an analysis of the HCCH and its instruments relating to marriage; the 1980 Child Abduction Convention; the 1993 Inter-country Adoption Convention; a Chapter on the challenges posed by the 1996 Child Protection Convention in South America; the 2000 Adult Protection Convention; a contribution on HCCH instruments in the area of maintenance Obligations; the work of the HCCH in the field of mediation in international children's cases; and a contribution overviewing the interaction between various HCCH instruments concerning child protection.

The next Section concerns HCCH instruments in the sphere of civil procedure, cross-border litigation and legal cooperation. No doubt, the HCCH has had some of its major successes in this sphere. But as the Chapters show, more work needs to be done given the ever-increasing cross-border movement of goods, services and people, and the need to better incorporate the

¹ HCCH, 'Members & Parties' <www.hcch.net/en/states> accessed 30 April 2020.

use of technology in cross border legal cooperation. Contributions concern the 1961 Apostille Convention; the 1965 Service and 1970 Evidence Conventions; the 2005 Choice of Court Convention; and finally, the 2019 Judgments Convention which was decades in the making. The final Section in Part II consists of contributions on HCCH commercial and finance instruments. Contributions specifically focus on the 1985 Trusts Convention; the 2006 Securities Convention; and the 2015 Choice of Law Principles, which constitute a soft law instrument demonstrating versatility in the kind of instruments HCCH has helped negotiate.

Part III of the Companion consists of Chapters that discuss the substantive development of private international law focusing on current and possible future priorities for the HCCH. In that regard, this Companion seeks to bridge the HCCH's past and its future.

The first Section focuses on current priorities. It consists of contributions on: a highly difficult area of international family law, i.e. parentage and international surrogacy and how common solutions may be found; how the HCCH may play a global governance role in the sphere of the protection of international tourists; and how the exercise of civil jurisdiction can be regulated. Specifically, this Chapter shows how the doctrine of *forum non conveniens* is increasingly being influenced by access to justice concerns, a matter borne out by a comparative analysis.

The final Section of the Companion contemplates possible future priorities for the HCCH. Contributions concern how private international law rules ought to be developed in the context of FinTech; what role the HCCH may play in setting out the private international law rules in the sphere of international commercial arbitration; how the digitisation of legal cooperation ought to reshape the fourth dimension of private international law; the potential development of special private international law rules in the context of complex contractual relationships; how the HCCH can engage with and embrace modern information technology in terms of the development of private international law; and finally, what role there is for the HCCH in developing a regulatory regime for highly mobile international employees. It is hoped that in addition to providing ideas on how progress may be made on its current priorities, the contributions in Part III can also provide a basis for the HCCH's future work.

SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS

The contributions in this Companion chronicle the evolution of the HCCH in the last 125 years and provide a deep insight into the operation and workings of the organisation. In addition, they critically assess the past and current work of the HCCH, as well as providing impetus for possible future directions. We encouraged the authors to use the Companion as a platform for critical reflections and assessments – their familiarity with the HCCH, the Organisation's work, but also its mandate and capacity, ensures the great value of each individual contribution.

We believe that this Companion could be of much interest in three particular ways. First, it is an academic contribution that provides considered expositions on current and future legal issues in private international law in general. The selection of authors, which are drawn from different regions and legal backgrounds, allowed considering topics from a number of different perspectives. The quality of the contributions, we hope, will result in the Companion serving a most useful source in the substantive development of private international law. We also hope that this Companion will constitute a useful resource for States, judges, legal practitioners, academics, and other public and private international organisations engaged in

advancing private international law, not only in terms of gaining an understanding of existing HCCH instruments, but also in their efforts towards legislative and policy reform.

Second, the Companion aims to provide considerable and thorough insight into the workings of the organisation itself, and thus serve well as a comprehensive practical guide to the HCCH. We consider that this will appeal to those who wish to gain a better understanding of the HCCH as an Organisation regardless of their familiarity with it. It may also benefit those who have been working with the organisation for some time and wish to broaden or deepen their understanding further.

Finally, in addition to highlighting the successes of the HCCH, the aim has also been to critically analyse the organisation and its work. Much work has been done by the HCCH, but more is required and we discerned four key themes.

The first underlying theme that can be observed throughout all contributions is how access to justice values increasingly underpin private international law. Just some examples include the call for enhanced access to documents in multiple languages; better use of technology to improve legal cooperation across borders; the need to enhance access to justice for consumers and international tourists; the impact of the right to a fair trial on access to justice for the employees of international organisations such as the HCCH; the bearing of fair trial rights on civil jurisdiction, such as through the doctrine of *forum non conveniens*; and ensuring access to justice for vulnerable sections of society. In all those instances this important value in its various manifestations is beginning to underpin the development of private international law. This is a positive development. We consider that private international law ought to be more than mere technical rules, but should be driven by underlying tangible values that have great practical importance. Access to justice is no doubt a laudable value, recognised in Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the UN. We strongly believe that private international law in general, and the HCCH in particular, could play a significant role in providing and strengthening access to justice at an international level. That the Organisation appears to understand that it can play this role is hinted at in its most recent HCCH Strategic Plan 2019–2020. This understanding is however somewhat limited as it is mentioned only in the context of the HCCH's non-normative work.² Based on the discussions in the present contributions, we consider that the HCCH could – and should – pursue a comprehensive access to justice agenda across its entire normative and non-normative work programme with much more vigour than is currently the case.

Another theme we grasped was the increased interaction between public and private international law. The area of civil jurisdiction is one where public and private international law especially ought to inform each other. While this interaction is being subjected to increased academic scrutiny, the same does not seem to be the case in practice. It will be important for the HCCH to pay more attention to public international law developments when pursuing its projects, especially in the sphere of the further work on the Judgments Project. Equally, it can only be hoped that if private international law pays increased attention to the public realm, the public realm is likely to return the favour, which is equally needed.

² A possible connection of the non-normative work of the HCCH is not a strategic priority of the HCCH per se but is mentioned in the Context to Strategic Priority 2. See HCCH, Strategic Plan of the HCCH 2019 – 2022 (2019) 5, <<https://assets.hcch.net/docs/bb7129a9-abee-46c9-ab65-7da398e51856.pdf>> accessed 30 April 2020.

On the same lines, we also observed that the interaction between HCCH instruments and human rights treaties, such as the UNCRC and UNCRPD, was much too evident. As so many HCCH international family law instruments are concerned with child protection and the protection of other vulnerable persons, this interaction is hardly surprising. Further, clear interrelationships exist in other spheres as well. For example, between international labour standards developed by the ILO and the rules on civil jurisdiction in employment cases. In the modern work environment where the employment relationship is radically shifting, the HCCH could also work towards greater cooperation with other international organisations such as the ILO to better protect the rights of weaker parties.

A third theme that emerged was the HCCH's willingness to adopt soft law instruments as opposed to only help negotiate conventions. There is no better example of this than the adoption of the 2015 Choice of Law Principles, which rightly promote party autonomy. With party autonomy perhaps now constituting a recognised connecting factor in private international law, as is also evident with the adoption of the 2005 Choice of Court Convention underpinned by this same connecting factor, the HCCH has no doubt made an important stride to embrace the potential of soft law instruments to achieve international consensus. Following the adoption of the 2019 Judgments Convention, which was decades in the making, and only successfully negotiated after the failures of the past were recognised, rectified, and compromises made, perhaps soft law instruments could be pursued with greater energy by the HCCH. Ultimately, it will be the experience of the 2015 Choice of Law Principles that will dictate whether more soft law instruments are negotiated under the umbrella of the HCCH.

A fourth theme that emerged is perhaps more subtle: multilateralism. Those contributions that consider the HCCH, its existing conventions as well as the Organisation's current priorities reflect that the founder of the HCCH, T M C Asser, conceived the first Conference in 1893 not only as a platform which develops unified rules of private international law, but also as a forum in which experts come together and develop these rules in a peaceful and professional setting. This goal has not changed, and multilateral expertise is combined to forge innovative legal solutions to the vexed challenges of a globalised world. And these solutions are adopted by consensus, the decision-making technique which lies at the very heart of the HCCH.

When dealing with the Organisation, it is important to appreciate that it decides on every aspect of its work programme and budget by reaching to the furthest extent possible consensus among its Members.³ This consensus-based approach has been chosen not without reason. While much effort may be exerted to achieve consensus, and achieving it may take longer, consensus-based decision making ensures the maximum buy-in of the Members in the outcomes produced by the HCCH. This buy-in becomes very clear in the Organisation's premier decision-making bodies, the Diplomatic Sessions, which adopt the HCCH's multilateral Conventions; the Council on General Affairs and Policy (CGAP), the 'engine room' which determines the Organisation's annual work programme; and the Council of Diplomatic Representative (CDR), which takes important financial and budgetary decisions. A common saying in all bodies, but also in Working and Experts' Groups, is: nothing is agreed, until everything is agreed; and everything is agreed by consensus.⁴

³ See Statute of the HCCH, Article 8(2) and Rules of Procedure of the HCCH, Rule II.H.3, available <<https://www.hcch.net/en/governance/rules-of-procedure>> accessed 30 April 2020.

⁴ The Rules of Procedure of the HCCH have rules to support voting both at meetings, i.e. at Diplomatic Sessions, CGAP and CDR, as well as by distance. See Rules of Procedure of the HCCH, Rule

This consensus-based approach to the multilateral work of the HCCH has been highly successful for the Organisation. It ensured that the development of private international law rules remained based on expertise and enjoys significant buy-in. But the HCCH is unlikely to be immune from the challenges to building consensus as experienced by other international organisations. Therefore, it will remain important for the HCCH to constantly review and, if necessary, to adapt its consensus-based approach to decision-making. This will be paramount so that the HCCH continues Asser's vision that a peaceful and professional forum develops multilaterally unified private international law.

FINAL REMARKS

Overall, and despite some regions not yet connected to the HCCH as they perhaps should be, the HCCH is now a global organisation for the unification of private international law. It is the world organisation for legal cooperation. It is 125 years old and going strong. The HCCH is highly relevant and important in an increasingly internationalised world. It is no doubt an organisation with a bright future. At a time when we are witnessing a pushback against multilateralism, the HCCH is an admirable example of the value of international cooperation and how international organisations can improve the day-to-day lives of people and enhance certainty and predictability for cross-border trade and commerce.

However, as the contributions to this Compendium make apparent, while much has been done, more is required. We sincerely hope that this Companion will be a contribution to the understanding of the HCCH and the development of the Organisation as well as of private international law. This project could not have been possible without the immense dedication shown by each and every contributor, to whom we are ever grateful. We also take this opportunity to thank the editors at Edward Elgar Publishing who expertly guided the publication process. We end this brief introduction here and hope that readers will find the contributions in this Companion as thought-provoking and useful as we did.