



Legal Practice Division

Dear Friends,

The accelerated rise of "Big Tech" constantly makes the headlines. As do the actions of various Governments across the globe, to control or at least stem the onward march of this unprecedented rise. However, it is relevant to also focus on what else is happening post-Covid-19, in the smaller yet key entrepreneurship space.

From the 22 to 25 March 2021, the IBA Closely Held and Growing Business Enterprises Committee is organising the **2nd IBA Virtual Entrepreneurship Conference: Innovation and entrepreneurship** in the next normal. This will also be a virtual conference, supported by your Committee and the IBA European Regional Forum, IBA Latin American Regional Forum, IBA Women Lawyers' Interest Group, IBA Corporate and M&A Law Committee, IBA Law Firm Management Committee and IBA Young Lawyers' Committee.

I do hope most of you will join the conference. We will have an opportunity to review the conference proceedings during our Committee Quarterly Call on 26 March 2021. Whilst, habitually, it is mostly officers who join, we have always welcomed members to participate and I have received several requests from members to attend these calls. If you would like to participate please do contact me and I will send you an invite.

So, what may you expect from the Virtual Entrepreneurship Conference? Vital knowledge, in-depth sessions, and useful networking. A gist of the proceedings follows.

The conference theme hinges on the 'next normal', which refers to the post-Covid-19 world, as against the norm that was the stamp of life before the pandemic. The proposition that is the basis of our discussion is that after the pandemic, the world will not return to its 2019 status, but rather unfold a 'post-Covid-19 era' that is different in many respects. As is obvious to everyone, in the last 12 months the world has witnessed dramatic changes, such as:

- an acceleration in the use of new technologies;
- digitalisation and new forms of working;
- disruption and fundamental reshaping in supply chains; and
- medical innovations, including e-health.

Beyond that, the traditional shareholder-value centred business model is now being seriously challenged by the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) responsibility model and companies of all sizes are increasingly acknowledging responsibility for their environmental and social impact.

The format of the Conference will include interactive sessions hosted by entrepreneurs. There will be keynote addresses and practical workshops will be held in small groups. The Conference has also scheduled two virtual social events, which promise to maximize networking experiences for attendees.

The Conference Co-Chairs and dear friends, Marco Rizzi and Nicole van Ranst, remain available for comment and assistance to all those who may need further inputs on the

Conference. I would encourage you to reach out to them and discuss any of your issues on participation. For my part, and taking my cue from the well-received Round Table discussion of IBA, I am organising, together with Andreas Kloyer, several smaller group discussions on New fields of Activity and Legal Services for Law Firms advising Entrepreneurs and SMEs. We hope to focus our various virtual round tables on:

- Which practice areas will be ‘winners’ in the next normal?
- Which fields of activity will change substantially?
- Will there be new fields of activity?

I would like to thank all of the moderators who are working on their specific topics, including Frédéric Cohen, Caterina Iodice, Elke Maria Napokoi, Slawomir Uss, Frank T. Boyle, Ilona Zekely, Gary Assim, Carlos A. Bello Hernández, Ellisa Habbart, Rabindra Jhunjunwala, Clara Ann Gordon, Jan Lindberg, Hin Han Shum, Arush Khanna, Zeina Obeid, Masha Ooijevaar and the many others who we hope will be able to join us.

Let’s turn our full attention on the Entrepreneur and his/her ecosystem, firm in the conviction that each entrepreneur has a shot at becoming what we label today “Big Tech”.

See you all (virtually) soon.

Warm regards,

Sajai Singh

Chair, IBA Technology Law Committee

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