

Report on the Global Online Forum on Law Firm Management – Future of the Legal Practice organized by the Swiss Chinese Law Association (SCLA) on 30th October 2020 13.00-15.45 CEST t

Prepared by Hermann Knott and Martin Winkler, Andersen, Cologne

1. Agenda

13.00-13.05 CET Time

Welcome Remarks by SCLA (Tianze Zhang)

13.05-13.20 CET Time

Managing a Global Group in times of Covid-19 (Peter Wood)

13.20-13.55 CET Time

Panel 1: Covid-19, Challenges or Opportunities

Chair: Paul Askew

Panelists: Doran Doeh, Yoshihiro Takatori, Yunyan Zhang, Délalie Hélène PATY KOUNAKE

13.55-14.10 CET Time

Law Firm in Expansion, Conflicts and Challenges- Take Dentons as an example (Zhenping Zhou)

14.10-14.40 CET Time

Panel 2: “Right” Size of the Law Firm (and Chambers): Future for the Big and Small?

Chair: Ms. Tsiptse Olga

Panelists: David Grief, Fabio Cozzi, Kowit Somwaiya

14.40-14.55 CET Time

Collaboration for the future- Take Greater Bay Area in China as an Example (Szeto Wai Sun)

14.55-15.25 CET Time

Panel 3: Future of the Young Lawyers

Chair: Tianze Zhang

Panelists: Zhengping Zhou, Aboubacar Fal, Raphael Zumsteg Yuan, Hermann Knott

2. Speakers

Hermann Knott, Partner at Andersen (Germany)

Doran Doeh, Barrister at 36 Stone (United Kingdom)

Zhengping Zhou, Senior Partner at Dentons (China)

Peter Wood, Partner at Withersworldwide (United Kingdom)

Tianze Zhang, SCLA Committee Member (Switzerland)

David Grief, Chief Executive at Essex Court Chambers Duxton (Singapore)

Fabio Cozzi, Partner at Willkie Farr & Gallagher (Italy)

Yoshihiro Takatori, Partner at KILO (Japan)

Tsuptse Olga, KINAL (Greece)

Kowit Somwaiya, Founder Partner of LawPlusLtd (Thailand)

Aboubacar Fall, Partner at AFLegal (Senegal)

Délalie Hélène PATY KOUNAKE, Founder of DHP Avocats (Benin)

Askew Paul, Marketing and Business development advisor at Withersworldwide (United Kingdom)

Szeto Wai Sun, Founder of HK Sun Lawyers (Hongkong SAR)

Yunyan Zhang, Senior Partner at JTNFA (China)

Raphael Zumsteg Yuan, Office Manager at De Bedin & Lee LLP's (Switzerland)

3. Welcome Remarks by SCLA

At the start of this Global Online Forum Mr. Tianze Zhang welcomed the speakers and participants and gave a presentation of the Swiss Chinese Law Association (SCLA).

Its vision is to be a forum and supporter of furthering the understanding and exchange between European and Asian countries. The two countries referred to in its name are a reference to the respective regions, thus not excluding, but inviting for lawyers, law firms, business enterprises and other organizations to join as members.

In line with its vision the SCLA promotes exchange between its members and with International organizations. SCLA is applying for an observer status with UNCTAD. It is organizing online fora and – when possible again – in-person conferences to allow the direct exchange of views, establishing personal contacts and share knowledge.

The SCLA also promotes the legal collaboration between China, Switzerland and European Countries. It is the editor of the Swiss Chinese Law Review which publishes articles reflecting the up-to-date legal aspects e.g. covers brand-new topics such as the legal impact of the COVID 19-pandemic. To sum up: SCLA membership provides excellent networking and business opportunities plus the chance to widen substantive knowledge and conceive new legal products.

4. Managing a Global Group in times of Covid-19

Then, Mr. Peter Wood gave his presentation on managing a global litigation team in times of Covid-19.

4.1. A brief history of Withersworldwide

Mr. Wood started by giving a brief history of Withersworldwide. In 1896 John Withers founded Withers as a domestic law firm with one office in central London. In 1995 Withers opened three offices in Europe. In 2002 Withers merged with a US law firm and by this time had six offices globally. In 2008 Withers moved into Asia and opened an office in Hong Kong. In 2015 Withers merged with a Qatar law firm.

4.2. A global dispute resolution group

The dispute resolution team managed by Mr. Wood globally embraces 54 partners, 172 fee earners, 518 support staff (firm wide). The team speaks 37 languages.

4.3. Managing a global team

First, managing a global team means maintaining communication across the firm. Withersworldwide is divided into three groups: The Business group, the dispute resolution group and the private clients and tax group. Therefore, it is important to maintain communication across the groups and across

the regional practice group leaders. And with the Covid-19 spreading across the globe Withersworldwide set up a so-called Covid Committee the task of which is ensuring that all employees are safe.

4.4. Challenges of the pandemic

Managing a global law firm has become more difficult in Covid-times because physical presence is presently in most cases not possible. The alternative ways of communication such as Zoom and Teams are now essential, but do not replace every element of leadership which we are used to.

The Pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on law firms. It is particularly hard for those who do not have technology in place to switch to remote working swiftly. At Withers, the London office had already transitioned to agile working with no fix office for anyone, meaning that the transition to remote working was almost seamless and immediate.

In relation to marketing Withersworldwide needed to adapt to digital marketing.

Withers also focused on regular communications with all teams, to keep everybody up to date week by week and bring the firm together. Preserving connectivity, culture and a feeling of togetherness is vital, and Withers has managed to do that fairly successfully, but it has required great focus and investment from the senior management team, regional leaders and the business services teams. To raise the spirits of the team Withers had a global virtual show called Withers Festival.

Keeping staff motivated, engaged, and supported is critical, not only to manage workloads and performance, but also wellbeing and mental health.

In some jurisdictions, Courts have shut down, in some not. In the US, the situation differs on a state by state basis.

Clients are facing uncertainty and expect their lawyers to help them which involves showing a certain degree of empathy.

4.5. Conclusion

The world is changing quickly, and client demands are changing with it. Law firms must keep pace if they are to stay relevant and succeed. The pandemic has broken down barriers but has highlighted weak spots too.

4.6. Discussion

Ms. Samantha Mathieu asked whether Mr. Wood has the perception that communication is more efficient now? Mr. Wood answered that Zoom and Skype actually help getting people together in terms of finding a time which is convenient for everyone involved. And we have to adjust to different ways of meeting people. However, there is no substitute to personal contact when you meet a client for the first time. Mr. Zhang passed the question to Mr. Juan José Iturbe López who explained that sometimes remote meetings may be more efficient. At the same time personal contact is a better way of communicating with clients. Then, a participant from Pakistan asked Mr. Wood whether Withers has seen declining or increasing work in certain fields during the pandemic? Mr. Wood explained

that litigation work has carried on and he expects insolvency work to explode at some stage. Tax and individual clients have carried on quite well. On the business side there has been a drop off, not in all jurisdictions, but particularly in the US.

5. Panel 1: Covid-19, Challenges or Opportunities

The chair of panel 1, Mr. Paul Askew, first gave an overview of the topics of the first panel: How is the pandemic shaping client needs and what are the key trends for law firms? What are the most important leadership and management issues? How can we rise to the challenges of remote working? What is the future of law firms: how will we evolve in this new world?

5.1. Pandemic trends and impact

Mr. Yoshihiro Takatori gave his presentation on pandemic trends and impact from the Japanese perspective. The Japanese government has just established the Japan International Dispute Resolution Centre which offers online hearing facilities. Also, the Japan International Mediation Centre has been established and implemented the Covid-19 Joint Protocol with the Singapore International Mediation Centre. This facilitates the resolution of cross-border disputes. This trend does not only include hard aspects such as technical equipment, but also soft aspects such as due process considerations. These soft aspects include avoiding the coaching of witnesses, ensuring the impartiality of the arbitrators when the arbitral tribunal is sitting physically together with one Party while the other Party is remote and the physically present Party is conversating with the arbitrators and the question on how to proceed when one Party objects to online-Arbitration. For law firms it is essential to collect and implement information on cybersecurity protocols, data protection and protection of trade secrets in online dispute resolution. There may also be due process issues because of different time zones e.g. a witness is examined after midnight in the respective time zone.

5.2. Leadership & management

Then, Mr. Askew asked Mr. Doran Doeh to give the European perspective on these trends. Mr. Doeh explained that from the arbitration point of view great efforts have been made by European Arbitration Institutions for remote arbitration. The international law firms have responded to the pandemic in terms of law firm management, i.e. most of them are working remotely. It raises a lot of long-term issues when lawyers are working from home. The nature of the office will change in the sense that lawyers only go into the office for certain things. This entails massive problems for law firms in terms of how they are going to organize themselves and develop the identity of the firm. How do they continue to attract clients and staff? Mr. Doeh took the view that offices still matter. But it will depend on the jurisdiction and the practice field of the law firm. Working remotely also raises the complex issue of brand development. What is the identity of the law firm that makes it distinctive? Last but not least, it raises the issue of how to organize the training of young lawyers because they cannot sit with their principal when they are not in the office.

Mr. Askew remarked that this last point raises the issue of how law firm culture translates in the digital world. Mr. Zhang asked Ms. Eszter Kamocsay to give the Hungarian perspective. She explained that on the Hungarian legal market similar questions have been raised: How to organize the training, the business development, the client relationship and the law firm identity if there is not a common space?

5.3. Challenges of remote working

Then, Ms. Paty Kounake gave the perspective from West Africa on the challenges of remote working. She explained that most of the countries in Africa are not in lock-down. Nevertheless, during the pandemic the remote working has increased. Cooperation between local African law firms and international law firms helps the local firms to get access to the technology required for remote working. The advantage for the international firms is that African firms master the local and regional laws. In Africa, the crucial issue of remote working is the technical equipment. In some countries in Africa the internet connection is not stable. Data protection and privacy is also a challenge. In any case African law firms have to move from their comfort zone and improve their technical skills in order to cooperate internationally. In order to successfully work remotely African law firms must invest in technology and increase specialization.

5.4. Future of law firms

Then, Mr. Askew gave an outlook on the future of law firms. Investment in technology will be a big issue. As there is no place for face-to-face how do law firms continue connecting with clients? How do law firms organize the training of young lawyers? Mr. Zhang asked Mr. Norman Clark-Walker to give the US-perspective. He explained that in his management consultancy firm he noticed that a number of his clients have adopted the “hybrid” scheme of working as an interim measure to get through the pandemic. A number of firms have made this “hybrid” scheme of working a permanent feature. It takes various forms: Some of the lawyers will never return to the office except for meetings. Some lawyers will be in the office two days a week and some lawyers the other two days a week. This has prompted the decentralization of the service providers within the law firms e.g. one of the client’s partner has moved from Latin America to Asia for personal reasons and so the client opened a virtual office in Asia. The challenges of this are: definition of the brand (traditional versus virtual law firm) and coordination.

6. Law Firm in Expansion, Conflicts and Challenges- Take Dentons as an example

Then, Mr. Zhenping Zhou gave his thoughts about the globalization of Dentons: In 2004, Dentons put the “globalization” into Plan by the “First Five-Year Plan”. In 2010, Dentons implemented a global legal service network strategy by the “Second Five-Year Plan”. In 2015, Dacheng formally merged with Dentons and set up the “Third Five-Year Plan”. Dentons started a global integration program by the “Fourth Five-Year Plan”.

Before 1980, there were no foreign law firms in China. At that time Dacheng was the largest law firm in China. By 2009, Dacheng had established an office in every Chinese province. On November 10, 2015, after more than a year of negotiation and bargain, Dacheng Law Firm and Dentons Law Firm, the largest law firm at the time, officially launched the merger. At that time almost 80% of the partners at Dentons were skeptical about the merger because they considered that Dacheng was a domestic law firm and not international.

The advantages of the merger are as follows: Through Dentons system, Dentons lawyers can quickly have their own offices in countries and regions where major economic and trade activities are frequent, and take the lead in the settlement of Chinese clients' foreign-related disputes,

enabling state-owned enterprises to have Dentons Chinese lawyers participating in major economic and trade activities. Under the Dentons Swiss alliance-style merger and acquisition model, global law firms implement a unified system of rules for communication with the media and customer relationship maintenance, which is also more conducive to maintaining the reputation of domestic companies and customers.

Original goal of globalization of law firms was to achieve the docking and integration of domestic and foreign businesses and realize resource sharing and mutual benefit. It can achieve a high degree of integration of international legal service resources, allowing Chinese lawyers to obtain international legal service capabilities and brands on this platform.

The internationalization of law firms is not only the internationalization of business service capabilities but should also include the core elements of the law firm, that is, the ability of lawyers, which can ultimately be internationalized.

The future global law firm should be more than just "a law firm". In this regard, it is worth noting that on September 29, 2019, the 14th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Sixth People's Congress of Hainan Province formally deliberated and passed the Law of Hainan Special Economic Zone Lawyers. The "Regulations" legislatively affirmed the organizational form of innovative law firms for the first time: non-legal professionals such as certified public accountants, registered tax agents, registered cost engineers, and patent agents are allowed to become partners of special general partnership law firms. The future law firm is not only a legal service organization, but more factors will be involved, including capital and comprehensive business services.

7. Panel 2: "Right" Size of the Law Firm (and Chambers): Future for the Big and Small?

Then the chair of the 2nd panel, Ms. Tsiptse Olga, introduced the topics of the 2nd panel. The outbreak and rapid spread of the SARS-COV-2 known as COVID-19 is threatening the global economy. It is also forcing entities like law firms, to confront hard questions about how they can and should conduct business during a global public health crisis. This health crisis came as a sequel, due to a long-term global economic crisis. The exhaustion/ fatigue is huge. The legal industry has struggled with the response to the challenges. Does the size of the law firm count?

7.1. Perspective from Mr. David Grief

Then, Mr. David Grief gave his perspective. He first pointed out that Chambers is not a law firm. Then, he explained that size is not of such relevance to the Bar because of its independent nature. There is much confusion about the difference between the two branches of the legal profession in England and Wales - solicitors and barristers. To understand the irrelevance of size you need to understand the differences in the profession. Both Solicitors and barristers can be known as LAWYERS. A lawyer is generic term for anyone who can give legal advice, and this can include Legal Executives and paralegals. England does not have a fused profession like Singapore or say the USA.

Chambers Duxton Singapore was formed in 2017, the first English model in Singapore, the members are not barristers they are Singapore lawyers but they are sole practitioners in a group practice.

The English Bar accounts for approximately 10% of practising lawyers in the UK; the lion share of 90 % being Solicitors. There are 9 times more Solicitors than Barristers, and this for a reason. This proportion makes numerical sense because Solicitors do more of the legal work, and it is more wide-ranging; the barrister does less of the work but is specialised. We used to be able to say that the Barristers were the Advocates; they stood up and represented clients in court, but of course this definition has been clouded by the fact that English solicitors can now become Solicitor Advocates. But on the whole, it is still essentially the barristers who appear in court to represent others, draft court documents and give specialised legal advice in person or in writing. On the other hand, the importance of Solicitors is that they provide legal services directly to the clients. If the matter is contentious – needs to go to litigation, the solicitor instructs a barrister to represent his client. Again – not totally clear cut as Barristers can now have what is known as ‘Direct Access’, but in most cases Barristers are instructed by Solicitors and not by the client directly.

Chambers is not a firm, nor are its members partners or employees. Rather, Chambers is comprised of individual barristers and also a number of advocates qualified in Singapore (“Singapore Members”), each of whom is a self-employed sole practitioner. Barristers operate in “Chambers” – essentially shared offices and collaborate on funding central resources by contributing an agreed % of their fees. What they earn is dependent on the amount of work they do and the fees they can charge. Solicitors operate in more corporate style structures. Most are employees at least until they make partner. The independent self-employed status gives the English barrister enormous flexibility and freedom to develop individual practices irrespective of any collaborative strategy of his or her colleagues i.e. members of chambers – because they are individual – may operate against each other. It is the comparative freedom of movement of the English barrister which allows him/her to develop an international practice with relative ease; the English solicitor generally must hold back and wait for mergers or alliances or a firmwide strategy to develop expertise or relationships within a jurisdiction. And although undoubtedly most work comes to us because of the reputation and relationship developed by the individual barrister, profiling the reputation and standing of the set as a whole also needs to be considered. But size – having a critical mass of expertise, is not an issue; certainly not the same issue that a law firm has. So in short – it is not the number of barristers that matter most to the success of a set of chambers, but the quality of those barristers and the reputation they individually and collectively develop for giving specialist advice that is worth paying a premium for!

The AI (Artificial Intelligence) is rather a matter for the solicitor and will not replace the barrister.

Ms. Tsiptse Olga asked Mr. Grief whether the Chambers model may work in any jurisdiction? He answered that it may work everywhere no matter if it is a common law jurisdiction or not. Then, Mr. Zhang invited a participant from India to comment. He explained that in India as well the members of chambers are individuals and not a group.

7.2. Perspective from Mr. Fabio Cozzi

Mr. Cozzi explained that the legal market is changing, and the changes started well before the pandemic. The changes relate in particular to technology. Standard work will be replaced by AI in the future. There is a tendency to focus on more complex disputes e.g. energy or finance dispute resolution. The economic crisis exacerbates the pressure from the clients to keep the costs low.

Against this background there is no one-size-fits-all solution. It is a matter of being global when you work with corporate clients, i.e. you need to cover different jurisdictions. On the other side flexibility is an issue, e.g. in countries like Italy the personal relationship with the client is important especially with family-run businesses. This flexible approach also relates to fees structures. Another strategy is offering technology-based solutions.

7.3. Perspective from Mr. Kowit Somwaiya

Then, Mr. Kowit Somwaiya gave the following recommendations for all kind of law firms no matter their size:

1. Embracing the emerging digital /ICT technologies for the management of the law firm and also for the professional practice;
2. Creating specialized practices that deliver high values to clients to move away from the commoditized traditional services that will be taken over by AI;
3. Building up speed and efficiency are more crucial to clients than the size of the law firm alone, especially clients from the banking and finance sector;
4. Building a team of young associates and non-lawyer professionals with tech capability.

As Mr. Kowit Somwaiya put the emphasis on speed of the work Ms. Tsiptse Olga asked him how the quality of the work can be maximized and at the same time speeded up? He answered that in order to build up the speed one has to allow the team to work from anywhere, at any time and with any device by using technology. Flexibility in terms of working hours is also required.

8. Collaboration for the future- Take Greater Bay Area in China as an Example

Mr. Szeto Wai Sun explained that 40 years ago Shenzhen was a small village of a few thousand souls. Now it is metropolitan. In terms of GDP, Shenzhen outpaced Hong Kong in 2018 and the gap is widening.

The significance of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is that the GBA is the future economic engine of China connecting China with the outside world through the BRI as GBA is strategically located at China's South Coast. In terms of legal services, the BRI will be highly relevant e.g. in the areas of finance, dispute resolution and investments.

In terms of opportunities there is no place for ideology or politics. When recruiting young lawyers, proficiency of Putonghua is required. Also, knowledge of China as well as willingness to travel to and work in China and accept a foreign environment is required

China is a market too big to ignore especially for countries along the BRI. Despite the Corona crisis China aims to maintain its growth momentum by increasing internal consumption and by opening up its markets.

Sun lawyers is a relatively young firm founded in 2003. Then, a phase of deindividualization i.e. by giving the law firm a corporate structure, and of internationalization followed. Sun lawyers joined the Eurolegal network as the first law firm outside Europe. Then, Sun lawyers formed a joint venture with a Macau law firm and a Guandong law firm. This joint venture is important to Sun lawyers in different respects: Talent interflow, Clientele interflow and investment opportunities introduction.

The age distribution at Sun lawyers is as follows: 60% are under the age of 35, 20% between 40-50 and 20% above 60. The aim is increasing the proportion of the younger generation.

In terms of number of lawyers, Sun lawyers now has ten. Sun lawyers plan to have 30 lawyers by 2030.

In terms of expansion of areas of practice, Sun lawyers plans to expand into Corporate Finance and International Arbitration.

Then, Mr. Zhang asked how does Sun lawyers collaborate across jurisdictions? This includes the question of language. Mr. Szeto Wai Sun explained that the Guangdong authority has a framework which allows joint ventures to be formed between law firms from Hong Kong, Macau and the GBA. This legal framework facilitates cross-referrals of clients. Mr. Shen, who is also a senior partner at Sun lawyers, added that all of the lawyers at Sun lawyers speak Putonghua and English quite well. Therefore, the language is not an issue. And every candidate shall be interviewed in both languages.

9. Panel 3: Future of the Young Lawyers

Then the chair of the 3rd panel, Mr. Tianze Zhang, introduced the panelists: Zhengping Zhou, Aboubacar Fall, Raphael Zumsteg Yuan, Hermann Knott. Raphael Zumsteg-Yuan is a Swiss lawyer working for the Hong Kong law firm de Bedin & Lee in the firm's representative office of Chongqing. He then turned to the first question: What do you think are the challenges faced by the law firm regarding the young lawyers? Are the issues the same or different depending on the different size of the law firms? And across the different cultures? Mr. Zhang addressed this question to Mr. Zhengping Zhou. Mr. Zhengping Zhou explained that from the Chinese perspective young lawyers typically have no salary in their first year. However, at Dentons young lawyers receive a good salary. Depending on the law firm the situation of young lawyers has a little bit improved.

Mr. Zhang then passed the question to Mr. Hermann Knott. Mr. Hermann Knott answered that from the European perspective, salary is an important issue for young lawyers. There is also competition between law firms, the judiciary and in-house counsel opportunities. Work-life balance is also a very important aspect in Europe. Law firms are also recognizing that the skillset must be more than purely legal i.e. commercial and technological skills are also required.

Mr. Zhang then passed the question to Mr. Raphael Zumsteg Yuan. In his view, one of the challenges is mobility: In the legal sector mobility is not as obvious as in the IT sector because legal work is related to a specific jurisdiction. However, technology enables to move from one jurisdiction

to another. Mr. Zhang asked him about the differences between Switzerland and China in terms of career opportunities for young lawyers. In his answer he explained that although salaries tend to be lower in China there are much more opportunities for personal development.

Mr. Zhang asked a participant from Nigeria to give the African perspective. Generally, the salary for young lawyers is poor in Nigeria. The Nigerian Bar Association tries to regulate the minimum pay for young lawyers. The challenge for law firms is that at the time when you are ready to reap your investments in young lawyers the corporate companies take them. Law firms are often used as a training ground.

Mr. Zhang asked Mr. Aboubacar Fall who is from Senegal, whether he agreed. In his answer, he compared the situation of young lawyers in France and Senegal: For lawyers in law firms in France a standard minimum pay applies, but not in Senegal. For their three years of training young lawyers in Senegal are in uncertainty in relation to their salary. Mr. Zhang asked him how law firms in Senegal attract talented lawyers? In his answer Mr. Aboubacar Fall explained that his law firm would promote the young lawyer by paying him a salary and offering him a secondment abroad plus a prospect in form of a career path.

Mr. Zhang then turned to the 2nd question: How do the law firms get more adapted to these challenges? Mr. Zhengping Zhou explained that Dentons is investing more and more in the career development and further education of young lawyers by offering opportunities around the world. Mr. Hermann Knott added that in order to prevent young lawyers to use the big law firms as training grounds i.e. they leave once they received the training, career development needs to be taken seriously. At Andersen young lawyers may participate remotely and at the costs of the firm in a LL.M.-Program in Business Law or Taxation at the University of San Francisco. Mentoring programs for young lawyers are also a very important component.

The 3rd question raised by Mr. Zhang related to the essential skills for future young lawyers. Mr. Cozzi answered that from the Italian perspective he would look for a willingness to work with passion and a very good academic background, entrepreneurship, and interest to contribute to the reputation of the law firm. In return, his law firm would offer opportunities of working abroad in order to learn different workstyles and cultural approaches. Mr. Aboubacar Fall added that he would be looking for a solid theoretical background plus a potential of progress, an ability to adapt to the corporate culture and a willingness to perform, i.e. to overcome difficulties and to work extra hours. Mr. Zhang asked how these qualities are measured? Mr. Aboubacar Fall explained that one needs to engage in a continuous discussion with the young lawyer. Mr. Hermann Knott added that at Andersen every three months there is an assessment talk with the young lawyer. The talk is not formal but conducted in an open environment where feedback is given in both directions, downward and upward. The first requirement is the substantive quality of the legal work. The second requirement is personality i.e. how the young lawyer is integrating into the firm and how flexible he is in approaching clients, most importantly how successful with and accepted by the client as a personality. The third requirement is being a successful member of a team.

The last question raised by Mr. Zhang related to whether Covid-19 provided opportunities for young lawyers? Mr. Raphael Zumsteg Yuan answered that due to Covid-19 he could not actually take on his new job. He signed his work contract just before the outbreak of Covid-19 and during the months of March and April his application for work and residence permit was on freeze. As China is now

back to business it is a chance for him. So the general conclusion was that Covid is an impediment to career development for young lawyers.

10. Remarks by Ms. Yunyan Zhang

Finally, Mr. Zhang shared a video by Ms. Yunyan Zhang. In that video she gave her thoughts on the opportunities of law firm management.

She began by describing the challenges:

The first thing that has changed the most is the work pattern: due to the need to maintain social distancing and necessary isolation. We cannot go to work, interviews, hold courts, or travel in the traditional way.

The second major change is that most of our customers have been greatly affected, and there are problems with the work content and fund payment.

The third major change is the great changes in the surrounding environment and original objective conditions, which directly affect our work and plans.

The fourth is the change of personnel. Many people are restricted, and international communication is restricted on a large scale.

The fifth is the challenge to the development of young people.

She went on explaining that after the pandemic, many meetings, training, exchanges, and information exchanges have turned into online communication, and many lawyers started working from home. Although not as direct and authentic as face-to-face communication, the new work pattern is also convenient. This reminds us of several dilemmas in the management of modern law firms: 1. Office costs remain high. The expenditure and investment in offices, secretaries, administration, publicity, etc. have prevented many law firms from achieving high profits and also prevented young lawyers from becoming partners faster and better. Law firms have to bear all kinds of heavy expenses. 2. There is a big gap in modern office and data innovation compared with other industries, so future development is limited, and risk management is insufficient. 3. A large number of multi-regional and multilingual services cannot be guaranteed in terms of timeliness and quality. 4. The professional division of labor and the reasonable distribution mechanism are not compatible enough.

Based on the observations, Ms. Yunyan Zhang thought of some innovative law firm management methods that break through the traditional model: Artificial intelligence and shared space. She explained that she is working with one of the world's best artificial intelligence law firms to discuss a combination of artificial intelligence and legal services. They have already had excellent research results in the field of legal artificial intelligence. That is, it can replace junior lawyers to make relevant legal search and analysis and can provide pad devices suitable for legal workers for voice and text conversion and translation. Such artificial intelligence will provide young lawyers with low-cost and high-quality services similar to team and secretarial collaborations. It can also reduce the cost of employment for partners, improve quality control and work efficiency. A large amount of data analysis can better combine the subjectivity of legal services with the objectiveness of legal facts.

In relation to shared space, she explained that the office space of a large law firm is a major aspect of the expenses of the law firm, and the mobile office features of lawyers and the convenience of a nanny-style life needs are actually difficult to guarantee. After the outbreak, online working may become the norm. She raised the question whether it is possible to establish a shared space, shared

office resources and auxiliary law firm model to adapt to the change and future needs? Offices and workstations are not fixed. Meeting rooms of different models and functions are arranged in advanced reservation, sharing secretary and the administration, bearing the cost proportional to the time and quantity used. Cloud office and online data exchange have become important ways of working. Accompanied with rich living and health facilities management, coffee, healthy meal customization and delivery, pets, life management and other supporting arrangements, lawyer's workspace can be more humane, comfortable, healthy and enjoyable. Such flagship law firm offices can be set up in major large cities, and other small cities can be set up in a miniature 7-11 supermarket model.

Of course, her proposition is just a framework and idea, the purpose is to let everyone have younger and more futuristic ideas and arrangements for the management of the law firm. The future is a world of science and technology, a world of data, and a world that pursues health and simplicity.

11. Closing remarks

Finally, Mr. Zhang and Mr. Knott gave their closing remarks and thanked everybody for participating in this fascinating Forum.

Cologne, November 20

sgd. Hermann Knott
sgd. Martin Winkler