
SEPPÄLÄ

ARBITRATION

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Chris Seppälä acts as an independent arbitrator, mediator and expert in relation to international commercial disputes. He founded the international arbitration practice of the Paris office of White & Case in 1988 (from which he retired in 2023) and has acted as counsel or arbitrator in hundreds of international commercial disputes. He is former Vice-President Emeritus of the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce (“ICC”) and has served as FIDIC’s Observer on that court. He is a former board member of the Finland Arbitration Institute.

Chris is internationally known for his experience of multi-billion dollar arbitration cases of the greatest legal and factual complexity. He has represented private corporations and banks, as well as sovereign states or state-owned entities (Algeria, Bulgaria, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea, Iran, Kuwait, Peru and Qatar), in international arbitrations, and has also served as chair of the tribunal or co-arbitrator in numerous such cases.

He is one of the world's leading experts on international construction contracts having served as Legal Advisor to the FIDIC Contracts Committee for the past 20 years and Dean of the Faculty of Contracts of FIDIC Academy, FIDIC's learning and development body. He is the author of “The FIDIC Red Book Contract: An International Clause-by-Clause Commentary” (Wolters Kluwer, 2023), a detailed commentary on the most widely-used international standard form of construction contract referred to by publishers as “*a unique book*” with a “*comprehensive treatise*” that “*furnishes an in-depth commentary*”. Practitioners such as Sir Vivian Ramsey stated that “*there is nobody better able to produce a detailed analysis of the 2017 Red Book than he is.*”

He was a member of the working group which prepared the UNIDROIT Principles of International Commercial Contracts 2016 and co-chair of the committee which produced the 2019 update of the ICC Commission's Report on Construction Industry Arbitrations: Recommended Tools and Techniques for Effective Management.

EDUCATION	BARS AND COURTS
JD, Columbia Law School BA, Harvard University	New York State Bar Paris Bar (emeritus)
NATIONALITIES	LANGUAGES
Finland United Kingdom United States	English French

EXPERIENCE

Most recent appointments as arbitrator

- Presiding arbitrator in an ICC arbitration relating to a claim by a European business agent against a European contractor who was awarded a "hook-up" contract for an off shore oil and gas project in the Middle East and governed by French law.
- Presiding arbitrator in an ICC dispute under a subcontract involving an off shore oil project in the North Sea and governed by English law.
- Co-arbitrator in an ICDR arbitration relating to the construction of a power plant in Hawaii governed by US (Hawaiian) law.
- Co-arbitrator in an ICC arbitration relating to a claim by a Latin American subcontractor against a European main contractor in relation to construction of a hydroelectric project in Latin America governed by the law of the Latin American country.
- Co-arbitrator in an ICC arbitration relating to a claim under a gas supply contract by a US purchaser against a gas supplier owned by an Arab State and governed by the Arab State's law.
- Co-arbitrator in an ICC arbitration relating to construction claims by a European contractor against an Arab State and governed by the Arab State's law.

Most recent instructions as Counsel

- Lead counsel for a European electrical utility in two ICC arbitrations relating to the termination of a contract for the supply of a nuclear power plant (2000 MWe).
- Lead counsel for another European electrical utility in two ICC arbitrations relating to prolonged delay in a contract for the supply of a nuclear power plant (1630 MWe).

- Lead counsel for a Middle Eastern developer in four related ICC arbitrations in Paris involving a dispute with a contractor concerning a major land remediation project, as well as ancillary court proceedings in the United States.
- Lead counsel for a consortium of major European contractors in an LCIA arbitration in London relating to claims arising out of construction of one of the largest privately-financed (BOT) infrastructure projects in Europe.
- Lead counsel or co-counsel for the consortium of European contractors, mentioned in the previous paragraph, in two separate ICC arbitrations in London concerning disputes with subcontractors arising out of the same privately-financed infrastructure project.
- Lead counsel for an African oil-producing State and an oil company in an ICC arbitration in Paris, brought by two Western oil companies concerning the interpretation of the State's standard form of production-sharing contract.
- Lead counsel for an African State-owned entity in an ICC arbitration in Paris, governed by the African State's law relating to the construction of a major dam and hydro-electric plant in Africa.
- Lead counsel for an Asian contractor in an ICC arbitration in Paris concerning technical and other disputes related to the supply and erection of a special steel plant in Egypt, and supervision of ancillary court litigation in Egypt and the United States relating to the call of our client's performance bond.
- Lead counsel for a major European industrial company in an ICC arbitration in London relating to a real estate project in China, including supervision of ancillary court litigation in London, England, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and Shanghai, China.
- Lead counsel for a Middle Eastern contractor, a partner in a joint venture having a contract for the construction of a highway in an Arab State and a co-defendant with a second partner in such joint venture, in an ICC arbitration in Paris brought against them by the third partner in such joint venture for an accounting.
- Lead counsel for an Arab contractor, the claimant, in an ICC arbitration against an Asian State relating to the construction of the main airport in such State.
- Co-counsel for a Saudi individual in an ICC arbitration relating to a dispute among the members of a joint venture holding the exclusive contract for the freight-forwarding of arms from the United States to Saudi Arabia.
- Co-counsel for a joint venture of European contractors in an ICC arbitration against an Arab State concerning a port project in that State.
- Lead counsel for a syndicate of European and Arab banks, the claimant, under an insurance policy, in an ad hoc arbitration in Amman, Jordan against the issuer of such policy, The Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation in Kuwait, and in supervision of successful proceedings to enforce the award in the courts of Belgium, France, Jordan and Kuwait.

- Lead counsel for a consortium of Asian contractors, the main contractor and a defendant in an ICC arbitration brought by its civil works subcontractor in relation to the construction of a hydroelectric project in the Middle East.
- Lead counsel (appointed by an Arab State's minister of oil) for an Arab State-owned company, the defendant, in an UNCITRAL arbitration brought by a contractor in relation to the construction of works for a major gas project in the Arab Gulf.
- Lead counsel for a Saudi cement manufacturer, the claimant, in an ICC arbitration in relation to a contract with a European cement buyer, the defendant.
- Lead counsel for a European contractor, the claimant, in an ad hoc arbitration in Lesotho, Africa, against a Lesotho State-owned body relating to the construction of a road.
- Lead counsel for Euro-Disney, the defendant, in relation to the first two ICC arbitrations that arose under contracts for the construction of the Euro-Disneyland theme park outside of Paris.
- Lead counsel for an Arab State's ministry of public works, the defendant, in the defense of an ICC arbitration brought by a local contractor for the construction of a major public building in an Arab country.
- Lead counsel for an Asian contractor, the defendant in an UNCITRAL arbitration brought by the Arab owner of an LNG plant claiming the plant had been defectively constructed.
- Lead counsel for owner of a Pakistani cement plant, the defendant, in an ICC arbitration brought by a European contractor whose contract had been terminated by the owner.
- Lead counsel for a European contractor, the defendant, in an ICC arbitration brought by its European subcontractor based on a "pay-when-paid" clause in a subcontract to build a road in an African country.
- Lead counsel for Telecommunications Company of Iran, the defendant, in an arbitration brought by American Bell International, Inc. before the Iran-US Claims Tribunal (The Hague) in relation to a major telecommunications project in Iran.
- Lead counsel (appointed by Egypt's State Lawsuit Authority) for an Egyptian State-owned company in an ICC arbitration concerning the construction of a major power plant on the Nile.
- Lead counsel for a US architectural firm, a co-defendant with a European contractor, in an ICC arbitration brought by an Arab hotel owner for alleged defects in the construction of a hotel in the Middle East.
- Lead counsel for a French contractor in relation to five joined ICC arbitration cases against the Libyan State relating to the construction of a major housing project and related utilities near Benghazi, Libya.

- Lead counsel for a Scandinavian contractor in an ICC arbitration involving a dispute with its Iranian joint venture partner in relation to a housing project in Iran.
- Lead counsel for a Scandinavian subcontractor in an ICC arbitration against a Dutch main contractor in relation to a housing project for a university in the Middle East.

Commercial and Financial Experience

Prior to joining the Paris office of White & Case in 1988, he had worked in the general practice group of Sullivan & Cromwell in New York, notably on public offerings of securities and mergers and acquisitions, and in general practice and international arbitration at the Law Offices of S. G. Archibald in Paris.

PUBLICATIONS AND ARTICLES

"The FIDIC Red Book Contract: An International Clause-by-Clause Commentary", Wolters Kluwer 2023

"Extra-Contractual Claims Against State Entities under Civil Law" [2024] ICLR 330

"Proposal for Enforcement of Agreements of the Parties, Final and Binding Determinations of the Engineer and Decisions of the DAAB under FIDIC's 2017 Rainbow Suite (as amended in 2022)" [2024] ICLR 106

"Welcome Amendments to FIDIC's 2017 Contracts", [2023] ICLR 131

"Recent French Court Decisions relating to International Contracts and Arbitration", Revista de Arbitragem e Mediação (Brazil), Vol 68, 2021 (co-author)

"Seppälä on the Past and Future of Construction Arbitration", Global Arbitration Review 27/28 March 2019

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Speaker, "FIDIC Contracts and the UNIDROIT Principles", Thirty Years of the UNIDROIT Principles - Past, Present and Future Relevance (conference), UNIDROIT Headquarters, Rome, May 6 and 7, 2024

Keynote speaker, "FIDIC Contracts and Civil Law", Ho Chi Minh City International Construction Arbitration Conference, April 25, 2024, online.

Speaker, "Dispute Boards", ICC Institute of World Business Law, Advanced Training, March 20, 2024, Paris.

Speaker, "Characteristics of Standard Forms of Construction Contract", 4th Construction Law Conference, K.N. Toosi University of Technology, February 1, 2024, online.

Speaker, “Extra-Contractual Claims against State Entities (Civil Law)”, Society of Construction Law, December 5, 2023, London

Panelist, “Construction Arbitration and Case Law”, FIDIC International Contract User’s Conference, November 29, 2023, London

Panelist, “The Past, Present and Future of FIDIC Contracts”, Turkish Contractors’ Association and ISTAC, October 17, 2023, Istanbul

Keynote speaker, “FIDIC Contracts”, Spanish Society of Construction Law, September 28, 2023, Madrid

Panelist, "Multi-Tiered Clauses in Arbitration", ICC International Congress; A Century of ICC Arbitration", July 6, 2023, Mexico City

Speaker, ICC Jurisprudential Debate relating to my book "The FIDIC Red Book Contract: An International Clause-by-Clause Commentary", ICC Institute, June 15, 2023, Paris

Chair, panel on "Avoiding construction arbitrations", IBA, 8th Biennial Conference on Construction Projects, March 17, 2023, Berlin

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Regularly ranked as a leading lawyer in international arbitration and international construction in the principal legal directories, such as Chambers, Who’s Who Legal and The Legal 500.

Louis Prangey Award, FIDIC’s highest award for meritorious service
