

## New head for Mauritius centre

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Dipna Gunnoo

Paris and Mauritius-admitted lawyer **Dipna Gunnoo** has been named as the head of the recently restructured Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Arbitration and Mediation Centre, known as MARC.

The centre was established in 1996, making it Mauritius's oldest arbitral centre, and updated its offering by unveiling its new MARC Court and advisory board last year. The court is presided over by **Neil Kaplan**, a leading Hong Kong arbitrator and former chair of the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre, while the advisory board is chaired by **Sarah Grimmer**, secretary general of the HKIAC.

A graduate of the Sorbonne in Paris, Gunnoo has worked in the litigation and international arbitration teams of Dechert in Paris, Derains & Gharavi in Paris and Brown Rudnick in Paris and London. She has also worked for French-Mauritian law firm PLCJ, which represents the Paris office of Bird & Bird in the Indian Ocean.

From 2015 to 2017, she was counsel of the LCIA-MIAC Arbitration Centre, a joint venture between the LCIA and Mauritian government which recently shut its doors, and was involved in the planning of the ICCA Congress in Mauritius in 2016, as part of the host committee.

The congress was the first to be held in Africa and featured the then United Nations secretary general Ban-ki moon as a keynote speaker.

More recently, Gunnoo helped organise the first Mauritius Arbitration Week, which MARC hosted in May this year and used to launch its new arbitration rules in English and French. In 2017, she also co-created the centre's young group, MARC45.

As head of the centre, Gunnoo will now be responsible for developing the arbitral institution locally and internationally. She will also promote Mauritius as a neutral seat for arbitration and spearhead training programmes and conferences for local and regional practitioners.

Kaplan is delighted by Gunnoo's appointment, saying that she has a "wide range of experiences in the field...and the skillset necessary to take MARC to the new level", with the support of the court and advisory board. With its "cutting edge rules" and facilities to hold hearings, MARC is an "obvious place" for settling disputes relating to Africa, being an "independent from government, home grown institution", he says.

Leading Nigerian arbitrator **Odefunke Adekoya**, a partner at Aalex in Lagos and member of the MARC Court, says Gunnoo's experience is needed in Mauritius "at a time when the closure of the LCIA-MIAC initiative... leaves a gap in the international dispute framework...that needs to be rapidly filled." She adds that she looks forward to working with her to attract international dispute resolution to Africa.

Belgian arbitrator **Bernard Hanotiau**, who used to be vice president of the LCIA-MIAC Users' Council, says Gunnoo is "a good choice" who will help MARC to take advantage of the various attributes that will contribute to its success as an African arbitral venue, "in particular its location in a mixed civil law-common law jurisdiction [possessing] an arbitration law which is one of the most progressive in the world."

Others are also full of praise, with **Nishith Desai**, of Nishith Desai Associates in Mumbai, calling her a "strong and dynamic talent" and **Jalal El Ahdab** of Bird & Bird in Paris saying she has what it takes to establish MARC "as a major player on the interface between the Asian and African markets."

MARC held its first roadshow in London last month as well as an event during Hong Kong Arbitration Week and an event in Singapore last week.