



My Take: Unity in Diversity

Skills and Professional Development





As the seasons change, it's hard to ignore the environmental challenges our society faces. And nowadays, this is especially hard for in-house counsel — with a regulatory environment that is constantly in flux. To that end, this Docket issue offers guidance for navigating these challenges, including articles focused on clean energy and what board members need to know about the company's impact on climate change.

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I'm delighted to be penning my very first message as the newly elected chair of ACC's global board of directors. As I take up the mantle, I'd like to pay tribute to ACC's outgoing Chair Simon Fish for his outstanding leadership. During his tenure, ACC saw global membership grow to include more than 45,000 members, employed by over 10,000 organizations, in 85 countries. Quite an achievement!

I'm proud to follow in the illustrious footsteps of Simon and his predecessors, and it goes without saying that I'm extremely proud of the work the association does in support of the global in-house bar. As general counsel and SVP Legal Affairs of du, I'm based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. My time in in-house roles in emerging markets has made me acutely aware of the valuable benefits ACC delivers to its members around the world. When I first arrived in the Middle East some years ago, not only were there very few in-house counsel, but also very few of them actually knew each other. At that time, the region had no in-house counsel groups. I experienced a profound sense of professional isolation, and I realized how completely I'd taken for granted the in-house bar's well-established

infrastructure in my former jurisdictions.

So, when the very first meeting of what is now the ACC Middle East Chapter took place a few years later, I was an enthusiastic attendee. I still vividly recall my surprise and delight when walking into the venue to discover more than 100 in-house attorneys, most of whom had never met before or even realized that the others existed!

Experiences like this inspired me to embrace the opportunity to make a direct personal contribution to the development of the in-house profession. I went on to become a founding board member of the ACC Middle East Chapter, ultimately serving on the global board of this important organization.

While it's clear that in-house counsel in emerging markets have much to gain from the access to resources, continuing professional education, networking, and other support a global organization like ACC can provide, it's also clear they have much to give in return. ACC's In-house Counsel Certification Program, for example, was conceived and piloted in Dubai in 2018. The program is the first of its kind, designed specifically to help in-house attorneys become proficient in the skills identified as critical to an in-house legal career. Delegates who complete the program and pass the assessment also earn the right to use the coveted "ICC" (In-house Counsel Certified) post-nominal.

The pilot programs proved so successful that this year ACC has also launched it in the United States, Europe, and Australia — receiving an equally positive reception in those markets. Tellingly, delegates praise not only the high quality of the curriculum, but also the opportunity the program provides to build meaningful connections with in-house peers who attend from the four corners of the globe. I encourage all ACC members to consider taking part in the certification program as part of their personal development plan. Learn more at acc.com/certification.

Reflecting on our increasingly globalized world, a consistent theme of ACC's research is that members look to the organization as a key source of information on doing business internationally. This echoes my personal experience. Whether I'm researching content on ACC's new website, chatting with peers in an online eGroup, or networking face-to-face with in-house attorneys from around the world at a Certification Program or ACC's Annual Meeting, I'm always struck by the fact that wherever in the world we may be located physically, we're united by the issues we face as in-house counsel. They are common to us all.

As I step into the leadership role, I intend to rely on my experiences in-house, as well as in private practice, to help further ACC's mission. As chair, I will focus on helping ACC reach its strategic goals, which include expanding global membership; lending my expertise in the areas of governance and diversity and inclusion; and furthering the Seat at the Table initiative.

I look forward to working with you, ACC leadership, and staff to take ACC's reach and influence even further — providing you with the resources, education, and networks you need to excel in your in-house careers and take up your own seat at the table.

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