

#GlobalAIJA

Eduardo De la Peña Bernal



Dear Beloved AIJA Community & Friends,

This is a very humbling moment.

During my crazy and globetrotting 9 years and counting of AIJA journey, I have attested first-hand the privilege it is to serve and represent AIJA and its members, and the heavy responsibility it is to carry out the Association's work and mission.

So, it is the most humbling honor to finally, and officially, submit before you my candidacy to continue serving our beloved Association, now as First Vice-President and Member of the Bureau for the next three years.

I am doing this for two reasons.

The first one, because I love AIJA and everything about it. Full stop.
The second one, because the job is not finished.

AIJA is yet to fulfill its promise not only as an European powerhouse, but as a true Global Force.

This issue is very close to my heart. If elected, as the first non-European AIJA President in 20+ years, I will push hard to deliver to AIJA a solid footprint where it has not had it before.

We can do this.

#GlobalAIJA can and will be a reality.

There is appetite for AIJA's offering in the global legal community. I have seen that when I had the opportunity and privilege to participate in the organization of AIJA seminars, half-year conferences and congresses across three continents.

Key then, is to meet our potential members where they are. It is not a scalable membership model, if we ask potential members based outside Europe that in order to become active in AIJA and reap the full value of what the association has to offer, they have to travel constantly to Europe.

Without detriment to the permanent organization of events in Europe, we should be consistent and relentless in the strategic organization of events across the world. This can be accomplished in at least two complementary ways:

One. By doing more of our traditional events outside Europe: congresses, half-year conferences and seminars.

Second. By proactively making a regional push to achieve global growth and empower our members across the Americas, Asia and Africa to organize annual or biannual regional meetings designated specifically to attract local members and provide the platform to fortify their network through AIJA.

The equation will only change if a lawyer from Asia, the Americas, or Africa knows that at the very least two (or three) events a year will take place in his or her region (at least the regional meeting and one of AIJA's traditional events like a Congress, Half-Year Conference or seminar). Then it will become easier for him or her to receive firm support to become active in AIJA.

This will create a true AIJA Americas, Asian and African network. In turn, this will bring along naturally, the benefit of having a bigger and more diverse roster of potential event organizers, speakers, national representatives, commission officers, Extended Bureau members and Bureau members to strengthen AIJA.

The dynamic #GlobalAIJA expansion, with the increase both in the attendance in AIJA events across the world and AIJA's membership, will provide tangible benefits to the association to keep AIJA thriving as it seeks to transition (hopefully) to a post Covid-19 era.

I am sensitive to this issue by virtue of having the honor to be entrusted with the responsibility to serve through this past two years as AIJA's Deputy Treasurer and Treasurer to help AIJA navigate, alongside my fellow Bureau members and the always adapting and on the go Brussels team, through the difficult backdrop that the COVID-19 global pandemic represented.

The challenges have abounded through the pandemic and have forced us, as an association, to change our model on the fly in reaction to the pandemic. And that we did. Here we are, still standing tall and bravely set to organize a groundbreaking Annual Congress for the first time in Southeast Asia and Singapore.

We must keep adapting. With the support of a growing association, we will be able to ensure within the next three years, the implementation of the measures needed to enhance AIJA's income streams (membership fees, registration fees and sponsorship) without compromising the high quality and professionalization of our events, while maintaining financial stability and creating long-term sustainability.

The time is now for #GlobalAIJA. We can do this.

As to my other life, meaning the one related to the actual practice of law, I am Counsel at the international law firm Reed Smith LLP. I am based in Miami and focus my practice on international arbitration and litigation representing corporate transnational clients, international businesses, and entrepreneurs in international arbitration proceedings and complex international litigation cases before arbitral tribunals and courts seated in the US, Latin America, and other places in the world. As an international arbitration practitioner, I have been very active in AIJA's International Arbitration Commission, where I had the privilege to serve first as Vice-President and afterwards as President. I am also a dual-licensed attorney in the United States and Mexico, with full J.D. degrees in both countries.

Therefore, if nothing else, when you happen to visit Miami, please do not be a stranger and call me. Mi casa es tu casa. My family, my wife Jessica, my eight-year-old son Pablo, my almost two-year-old daughter Valentina, and myself, of course, we are always happy to meet and welcome AIJA friends from every corner in the world. I promise you lots of AIJA spirit.

Best regards dear friends, see you in Singapore,

Eduardo.