

Progress in 2013

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When we took up the role of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Preparatory Committee in March this year we wondered how much progress the Committee would be able to make before the turn of the year. The task ahead of us was not only significant but colossal.

What we would like to say at the very beginning is how supportive and dedicated members of the Preparatory Committee have been to ensure that the tasks we set ourselves have been developed.

We would like to reflect on some of the key milestones we have achieved in 2013.

Before we do so, just a reminder of the structure of the working groups delivering the work:

- Legal framework (led Mr. Johannes Karcher – Germany);
- Financial aspects; (led Mr. Jean Francois Magana – France)
- IT; (led Mr. Neil Feinson – United Kingdom)
- Facilities; (led Ms. Anne Goedert – Luxemburg)
- Human resources and training. (led Mr. Oliver Varhelyi – Hungary)

The secretariat is held by Ms. Eileen Tottle (UK)

The Preparatory Committee has met four times in 2013.

Right from the start the Committee set to work on a number of the larger set-pieces of work. Namely, launching the public consultation on the draft Rules of Procedure of the UPC and a separate process for a pre-selection procedure for future judges of the UPC.

Stakeholders have taken the consultation on the Rules of Procedure very seriously. We have received over 100 constructive, high quality submissions. With the invaluable help of the Drafting Committee we are now in the process of analyzing. This is really encouraging and so is the response to the pre-selection process. The pre-selection process has proved a huge success attracting well over a 1,000 expression of interest.

To help with this work an Advisory Panel has been appointed chaired by Sir Robin Jacob. The Advisory Panel contributes to the work in both the assessment of the qualification and experience of candidates and in the establishment of the training requirements for the candidate judges.

Another significant milestone for the Committee was agreeing the procurement of an electronic filing and case management system for the court with multiple divisions. We are delighted that this has been agreed before the end of 2013 as work can now begin in detail on the requirements of such a system.

A number of the Signatory States are still exploring regional divisions with the majority making plans to have at least one local division in their country. In support of the accommodation the Committee has also accepted recommendations made from the Facilities Working Group on minimum specification. However, this is a recommendation and each Country will need to take a pragmatic approach in the early days of set up.

So reflecting on the work that has been done over the last ten months we feel satisfied to have made a solid start. The challenge as we face 2014 will be to keep up momentum without sacrificing quality and to work with users and stakeholders as far as we can to ensure the Court is a success.

We realize that the work of the Preparatory Committee is being followed with great interest by our stakeholders and receiving precise information about the results of our work is of great importance to them. We are reflecting on how to improve this.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a restful and enjoyable break and will return early in 2014 with a forward look for the work of the Preparatory Committee.

Paul van Beukering (Chairman) and Alexander Ramsay (Vice-Chairman)