

Von Wobeser partner to chair Americas arbitration group

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Montserrat Manzano

A partner at Von Wobeser y Sierra SC has been elected chair of the Americas Initiative at the Institute for Transnational Arbitration (ITA).

Montserrat Manzano assumed the role on 22 July. She replaces former chair **Eduardo Gonçalves**, partner at Brazilian firm Mattos Filho Veiga Filho Marrey Jr e Quiroga Advogados. Previous chairs have included Bofill Mir & Alvarez Jana Abogados founding partner **Andrés Jana**, Debevoise & Plimpton's **Dietmar Prager** and Colombian arbitrator **Eduardo Zuleta**.

Manzano has worked at the Mexican firm for 19 years, advising on cases under ICC, ICSID and UNCITRAL rules.

She has been a Von Wobeser partner for two years, following her [promotion](#) to the role from senior associate in 2018.

She specialises in the resolution of commercial and investment disputes, as well as administrative law and state contracts in the energy, construction and shipping industries, among others. She previously worked at international firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer.

Manzano had been vice-chair of the Americas initiative since 2017. The initiative aims to provide opportunities in the region's arbitration community by working with local institutions to organise conferences and educational events. Between 2015 and 2017, Manzano also chaired the organisation's Young ITA Committee, which encourages the involvement of young arbitrators aged 40 and under in ITA's educational programmes and services.

The ITA provides educational services, publications and networking events to lawyers, judges and academics in the arbitration field. It is present in over 55 countries and is a subsidiary of the Center for American and International Law, a non-profit organisation that has provided arbitration services since 1947.

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As head of operations at the Latin American focused initiative, Manzano will front its collaboration with leading arbitral institutions and practices in the region to promote good practices in the field. Other priorities include organising workshops for young arbitrators and practitioners in the region, holding conferences and collaborating on educational events.

Von Wobeser managing partner **Claus von Wobeser** told GAR sister publication *Latin Lawyer* that he was proud that the firm's partner was selected for the role. "Having a Latin American woman lead the initiative is a big win for our region and it is a well-deserved recognition for her work both at ITA and in the field of arbitration as a top lawyer," he adds.

ITA director **David Winn** welcomed Manzano to the role in the statement, in which he added that the new chair will bring "new energy and extraordinary creativity" to the role.

Manzano aims to increase opportunities for lawyers in the Latin American and Canadian arbitration spheres to collaborate with the ITA. The partner intends to do this by circulating ITA-approved guidelines on best practice in arbitration as well as building on a healthy international network of lawyers in the field. "By the end of my term, we will have an increasingly diverse membership base and a wide range of practitioners from these regions actively involved," predicts the new chair, who says that her prior experience as vice-chair and familiarity with the structure of the ITA puts her in a strong position to continue to collaborate and create important connections with key players in the field.

However, following the covid-19 outbreak, the Americas Initiative has adapted its approach. The team is working on producing content, events and key opportunities that are accessible remotely says Manzano, who adds that the team is drawing on its energy and creativity to provide opportunities that "strengthen the exchange of ideas among arbitration practitioners throughout the Americas."

The legal market may have had to adapt rapidly to match the demands of covid-19, but this has proven the legal market's ability to innovate and be more efficient in spite of the crisis, Manzano says. "The future of arbitration after covid-19, will certainly lead the legal profession in Latin America to achieve better results for our clients in terms of efficiency and costs, build stronger institutions and law firms, as well as advance a shift towards wellbeing within our profession," affirms the new chair who adds that "I am eager to see how this change of paradigm will reshape the legal profession."

A 2020 Americas workshop is set to be held by the ITA this autumn.

The Americas initiative was launched by the ITA in 2003, to improve access to educational tools and key opportunities in Latin America's arbitration arena. The group has since held conferences in São Paulo, Mexico City, Buenos Aires and Bogotá. In 2014 it launched the ITA Latin American Arbitration Forum (ITAFOR), a leading online forum for arbitration practices in the region.

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