PRESS RELEASE

CABINET APPOINTS INAUGURAL BOARD OF THE BVI INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION CENTRE

Tortola, British Virgin Islands – 9 September – The BVI International Arbitration Centre today announced the appointments of five inaugural members of the BVI International Arbitration Centre Board (the “BVI IAC Board”). The first members of the BVI IAC Board were appointed by Cabinet effective 7 September, 2015 under section 95 of the Arbitration Act, 2013 (the “Act”). The newly appointed board members are Mr. John Beechey, Mr. Mark Forte, Mr. Cherno Jallow, QC, Mr. Murray Smith and Ms. Felice Swapp. Mr. John Beechey was appointed as Chairman. Members of the BVI IAC Board were selected based on their relevant knowledge, experience and expertise which could aid the BVI IAC in the performance of its functions.

Speaking on the appointments of the board members, Premier Dr. the Hon. D. Orlando Smith, OBE commented, “The development of the arbitration sector is one of my Government’s priorities as we work towards further growth and diversification of the BVI economy. I am therefore very pleased to welcome the first board members of the BVI International Arbitration Centre. I have every confidence that their respective expertise and insights will be invaluable and very beneficial to the growth and development of the Centre and of arbitration and dispute resolution services in this Territory.”
Newly appointed Chairman Beechey commented “The decision of the Cabinet and the generous endorsement of the Premier are signals of government's serious intent to promote the establishment of an international arbitration centre in the BVI, which will offer a service of the highest quality and integrity to its users. It is an honour to be asked to serve on this inaugural IAC Board and to have been entrusted, with my colleagues on the Board, with the task of taking forward the development of the new Centre.”

**Synopsis of the newly appointed Board Members**

The members of the BVIIAC Board are appointed by Cabinet of the Virgin Islands. On 7 September, 2015, Cabinet appointed the following inaugural members to the Board:

1. **Mr. John Beechey** (Chairman) is an independent arbitrator. President of the ICC International Court of Arbitration from 2009 until June, 2015, Mr. Beechey oversaw the introduction of the new ICC Arbitration and Mediation Rules and new Rules for Experts. He was primarily responsible for the Court's move to new premises and he proposed and implemented the establishment of the new Governing Body, which has the responsibility for long-term strategic planning for the Court. During his term of office, the Court opened operations in New York and saw the inception of the Jerusalem Arbitration Centre and many changes to the practices of the Court, the principal purpose of which has been to improve the efficiency of the Court and the quality of the service that it offers to its users. He was also a founding partner of the international arbitration practice at Clifford Chance and has had a long and distinguished career in dispute resolution.

2. **Mr. Mark Forte** is a Partner and Head of Litigation & Restructuring in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) office of Conyers Dill & Pearman. He specialises in complex cross-border dispute resolution and contentious cross-border insolvency. Mark also advises foreign states,
government agencies and liquidators on international asset tracing measures. Globally recognised for his expertise, Mark has been ranked for the last 6 years as Tier 1 in his practice area in Chambers Global, as well as in Legal 500 and Who’s Who Legal.

3. Mr. Cherno Jallow, QC was Attorney General of the British Virgin Islands from 1999 to 2007. A well-respected and proficient legislative draftsman, he was a member and later Chair of the Focus Group established by the BVI Financial Services Commission in 2011 to see to the enactment of modern arbitration legislation for the British Virgin Islands and related issues. He is currently the Director of Policy, Research and Statistics at the BVI Financial Services Commission.

4. Mr. Murray Smith is a chartered arbitrator with extensive experience in commercial litigation and arbitration. He has acted as arbitrator in international commercial arbitrations and has served as chairman, as party appointed arbitrator and as sole arbitrator. For more than 20 years, Mr. Smith has also been involved in international commercial arbitration continuing legal education programs in England, British Columbia, Yukon, the United States and the Caribbean (including the BVI). He was a founding member and Chairman of the North American Branch of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators from 2005 to 2008 and collaborated with Martin Hunter and Allan Redfern in writing the second edition of the leading text “Law and Practice of International Commercial Arbitration”.

5. Ms. Felice Swapp is the Chief Operating Officer of Harneys. She joined Harneys in 2013 after working as Executive Operating Director of San Francisco Jazz (SFJAZZ) with responsibilities for fundraising, marketing, education, finance and administration, and the $65M SFJAZZ Center construction project. Ms. Swapp has a broad background as an engineer, strategic management consultant and business executive. She worked early in her career as a project engineer, and then went on to serve in roles including as a consultant with McKinsey and Company and Director of Strategic Initiatives at Hewlett Packard (HP) where she focused particularly on new business groups and emerging markets.
About the BVI International Arbitration Centre

The BVI International Arbitration Centre was established under section 93 of the Arbitration Act, 2013 to provide full-service support and facilities for arbitration and mediation proceedings. Members are appointed for staggered terms to ensure continuity on the Board. Current appointments are as indicated below:

John Beechey – 2 years
Mark Forte – 2 years
Cherno Jallow – 3 years
Murray Smith – 2 years
Felice Swapp – 3 years

For further information, please contact:

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