

# Kluwer Mediation Blog

## The United Nations Development Programme Promotes Commercial Mediation in Iraq

Greg Bond (Bond & Bond Mediation / University of Wildau) · Sunday, October 6th, 2024

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supported by the European Union, established a “[Support to Justice Initiatives Curbing Corruption and Promoting Commercial Dispute Resolution Programme](#)” in Iraq in 2021.

As part of that programme, the UNDP organised two intensive courses in commercial mediation for university law faculties in January and February 2024, taking place in Baghdad and in Sulaymaniyah (Kurdistan), hosted at each venue by the local American University. The courses were attended by students and faculty from nine universities: in Baghdad by American University of Iraq-Baghdad, Al-Iraqia University, Al-Mustansiriyah University, Al-Turath University, and Diyala University; in Sulaymaniyah by American University of Iraq-Sulaimani, Duhok University, Soran University, and Tishk International University, so that a total of around fifty students and faculty attended.

Promoting mediation in Iraq is part of a bigger picture to support awareness of and initiatives in dispute resolution, in particular within the context of attracting international investment. The New York Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards came into force in Iraq in February 2022. Iraq drafted new arbitration legislation this year, in a [process which was supported by the UNDP](#). And Iraq signed the [United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation](#) (“Singapore Convention”) on 17 April 2024.

After the two training courses, teams from four Iraqi universities were coached for and then attended two international commercial mediation competitions. A joint team of Al-Iraqia University and American University in Iraq-Baghdad and a team from Al-Turath University took part in the [IBA-VIAC CDRC Mediation and Negotiation Competition](#) in Vienna in July, with six students and local coaches attending. And a team from the American University of Iraq-Sulaimani with four students and a local faculty member took part in the [International Investor-State Mediation Competition \(IIMC\)](#) in Colombo in August. Participation was supported by the UNDP.

These are the facts. Then there is the impact of this programme, and in particular the mediation training element. Most of the students and faculty who attended had little or no prior knowledge of mediation, and so one aim was to raise awareness of mediation as an option in dispute resolution. Another aim was to offer students and faculty practical training in mediation, as both parties and counsel using mediation and as mediators. And a third was to give Iraqi universities opportunities to participate in international mediation competitions. While Iraqi universities have attended

international arbitration moots and other international moot courts, this year saw the first ever participations from Iraq in international mediation competitions. As a result of this programme, there are at least fifty new ambassadors for mediation, and probably many more, as participants shared their experiences with family, friends and colleagues, and the universities who sent students to the training have been exposed to mediation.

It is thanks to the UNDP that this mediation training programme took place in Iraq, and in particular thanks to the wisdom, energy and commitment of Sophie Tkemaladze, whose brainchild it was and who organised it and participated in it, and also to Hayder Hameed, without whose wonderful logistics support none of the above could have happened.

The learning for participants in the training and the two international competitions was very tangible. Enthusiasm was high. Students worked very hard and made the very most of this opportunity. Their energy, commitment, willingness to test new ideas and try new methods, teamwork, respect and gratitude all touched me deeply. Many felt that they were not just learning about mediation within the context of commercial disputes, but were gaining life skills and developing personally. Working with Iraqi students and colleagues as a trainer in the programme and as a trainer and coach for the two international competitions was a great privilege and I am so very grateful to have been invited.

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### Promoting Mediation, United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation

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