

Achieving fast, innovative and cost-effective dispute resolution for businesses

EFFICIENCY. INNOVATION. RESOLUTION.

Nneka Emilia Onyema – Arbitrator

OVERVIEW

I am a Reader in International Commercial Law and Interim Pro-Director Learning and Teaching at SOAS University of London. I teach international commercial arbitration and international investment law. I am qualified to practice law in Nigeria, a Solicitor in England & Wales, Fellow of Chartered Institute of Arbitrator and independent arbitrator. I convene the SOAS Arbitration in Africa conference series and lead the SOAS Arbitration in Africa survey research project. My research interests focus on the development of international arbitration in Africa and the engagement of Africans in international arbitration. It further interrogates the intersections of the discourses on diversity with particular reference to Africa, in international arbitration. I practice as arbitrator (but not as counsel).

STYLE AND APPROACH

In my role as presiding or sole arbitrator, my style is a little more interventionist by active engagement and asking of relevant questions for clarification. I also prefer to set out in good time a clear agenda and timeline for various stages of the proceedings with built-in flexibility.

As presiding arbitrator, it is important for me to include all tribunal members and ensure that each does and contributes a fair amount of work to the discussions and drafting by the tribunal. I also listen carefully to the parties and their lawyers and my fellow arbitrators.

As co-arbitrator, I work with the full tribunal and ensure that tasks allocated to me are done in good time and I engage with discussions and ask relevant questions. I share my views with the tribunal and only once in my career so far, have I indicated the need for me to write a dissent (which luckily was not eventually necessary as the parties settled).

I take my personal mandate and obligations as an arbitrator very seriously and discharge my responsibility with due care.

EXPERTISE

- Commercial Contracts
- Construction contracts
- Education
- Shipping
- Shareholders contracts
- Partnership agreements

EXPERIENCE

- Sole arbitrator in a breach of sub-contract for the design, supply and installation of audio-visual system under ADCCAC Rules [ongoing].
- Sole Arbitrator in an ICC arbitration over real estate Fund investment (concluded with a consent award).
- Presiding arbitrator over a shareholder's contract dispute under KIIAC Rules (Kigali) (concluded with a final award).
- Co-arbitrator under a property purchase contract dispute under ADCCAC Rules (Abu Dhabi) (concluded with a consent award).
- As claimant counsel in a construction dispute in the 1990s (Nigeria).

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- PhD in International Commercial Arbitration: Queen Mary University of London: 2002-2007.
- LLM (Commercial and Corporate Law): King's College London, 2000-2001.
- LLB (Hons): University of Jos, Nigeria: 1984-1988.
- Fellow, Chartered Institute of Arbitrators: October 2008.
- Barrister & Solicitor, Supreme Court of Nigeria: August 1989 (continue to maintain my practising certificate).
- Solicitor (np), England & Wales: 2002.

CAREER HISTORY

- 2020-January 2021: Pro-Director Learning & Teaching, SOAS University of London.
- 2017-Present: Reader in International Commercial Law, School of Law, SOAS.
- 2007-2019: Alternate Tribunal Secretary, Commonwealth Secretariat Arbitral Tribunal.
- 2010-2014: Visiting Lecturer, King's College London.
- 2002-2006: Research Fellow and Tutor, Queen Mary University of London.
- 1992-2000: Partner, law firm of Emilia Onyema & Co, Lagos.
- 1992: Associate, Yemi Candide-Johnson & Co, law firm, Lagos

ACCREDITATION

- Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

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