Forum Shopping before International Tribunals

As the number of international tribunals increases, the issue of forum shopping is begining to arise quite frequently in public international law. How should it be handled? Are doctrines of private international law useful? If so, which one?

It seems that the most common practice, and received wisdom, is to apply the doctrine of *lis pendens*. But why should the doctrine regulating parallel jurisdiction in the civil law world be made the applicable doctrine in the international arena? In case public international scholars have not noted, there is another legal tradition which deals with the issue differently (although it has been harder to see in Europe in recent years).

So what about exploring whether *forum non conveniens* could be an interesting option for regulating parallel litigation before international courts?

This is what a recent Article by Professor Joost Pauwelyn (HEI, Geneva) and Brazilian scholar Luiz Eduardo Salles on Forum Shopping Before International Tribunals: (Real) Concerns, (Im)Possible Solutions undertakes.

There is no abstract, but here is one of the first paragraphs of the introduction:

> *The article examines the nature and potential concerns of the relatively new phenomenon of forum shopping among international tribunals. Further, it asks the question whether domestic law principles such as res judicata, lis pendens, and forum non conveniens could be used to alleviate such concerns. The article finds that, to the extent these principles apply before international tribunals, they fail to*

address the problem. Instead, states should regulate forum shopping explicitly in their treaty regimes, and international tribunals should defer to such explicit treaty clauses. The article identifies the distinction between questions of a tribunal's jurisdiction and questions of admissibility of claims as key to the implementation of jurisdictional coordination— be it through general principles of law or treaty rules on forum selection. This distinction is generally applicable before international tribunals but has been overlooked in the WTO context. The article also argues that to deal with the rise of forum shopping in international adjudication, more thought should be given to the question of whether tribunals have or should have some margin of judicial discretion not to exercise jurisdiction in cases in which forum shopping is at stake. To put these proposals in dynamic context, the article uses four variables, or scales, that will impact the assessment of both concerns and solutions for forum shopping among international tribunals, namely (1) a regime vs. system approach to international tribunals, (2) a partyfocus vs. legality-focus, (3) consensual vs. compulsory jurisdiction, and (4) specific vs. general jurisdiction.

The Article is forthcoming in the *Cornell International Law Journal*.