

Asser's Enduring Vision: The HCCH Celebrates its 125th Anniversary

By the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law

On 12 September 1893, Tobias Asser, Dutch Jurist, Scholar and Statesman, realised a vision: he opened the first Session of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH). Today, exactly 125 years later, the HCCH celebrates Asser's vision and the occasion of this First Session with a solemn ceremony in the presence of his Majesty The King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands.

Believing passionately that strong legal frameworks governing private cross-border interactions among people and businesses not only make a life across borders easier, but are also apt to promote peace and justice globally, Asser conceived the HCCH as multilateral platform for dialogue, discussion, negotiation and collaboration. Asser organised this first Session to canvass issues relating to general civil procedure and jurisdiction. More specifically, delegates, who hailed from 13 States, dealt with subject matters comprising marriage, the form of documents, inheritance/wills/gifts and civil procedure. The First Session was a great success producing the Hague Convention on Civil Procedure. This instrument was adopted during the Second Session in 1894 and signed on 14 November 1896. Its entry into force on 23 May 1899 coincided with the first Hague Peace Conference – another of Asser's great visions. The global community honoured the enormous value of Asser's vision in 1911, bestowing upon him the Nobel Peace Prize for instigating the First Session of the Hague Conference on Private International Law to “prepare the ground for conventions which would establish uniformity in international private law and thus lead to greater public security and justice in international relations.” (J G Løvland, Chairman of the Nobel Committee, Presentation Speech, Oslo, 10 December 1911).

Since this First Session, the HCCH has gone forth to develop an array of private international law instruments in the areas of international child protection and family law, international civil procedure and legal cooperation as well as international commercial and finance law. It is the pre-eminent international

organisation for the development of innovative, global solutions in private international law. The HCCH remains steeped in Asser's vision. It continues to connect, protect, and cooperate. Since 1893.