

## 2024 African & Middle Eastern Regional Meeting

4-6 DECEMBER | CASABLANCA MARRIOTT HOTEL | CASABLANCA, MOROCCO

### WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2024

19.00 – 22.00

#### WELCOME RECEPTION AND DINNER

Casablanca Marriott Hotel

The inaugural event of the seminar will kick off with a welcoming reception and buffet dinner for local clients and ALFAI attorneys, hosted at the elegant Casablanca Marriott Hotel. This evening will provide an opportunity to network, mingle, and enjoy a delicious array of gourmet dishes in a sophisticated setting. Join us for an engaging start to the seminar, where you can connect with peers and set the stage for a productive and insightful series of sessions ahead.

*Attire: Business attire, jacket or blazer is recommended.*

### THURSDAY 5 DECEMBER 2024

7.00 – 8.45

#### BREAKFAST

Casablanca Marriott Hotel

Breakfast at your leisure is included in your hotel room rate.

9.00 – 13.00

#### PROGRAM SESSIONS

Casablanca Marriott Hotel

*(Room TBD)*

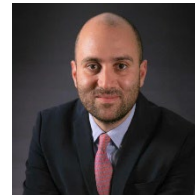
*Attire: Business attire, jacket or blazer is recommended.*

9.00 – 9.10

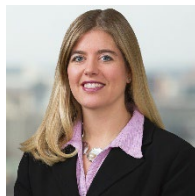
#### WELCOME



**Paula Boast**  
*Africa & Middle East  
Regional Group Chair*  
CHARLES RUSSELL  
SPEECHLYS LLP  
Manama, Bahrain



**Wassim Benzarti**  
*Host Firm*  
WESTFIELD MOROCCO  
Rabat, Morocco



**Grace Garcia**  
*ALFA International  
Board of Directors  
Chair*  
MORRISON  
MAHONEY LLP  
Boston, MA, USA

9.10 – 9.40

### KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Lamia Merzouki is Chief Operating Officer at Casablanca Finance City Authority (CFCA), Chair of the United Nations-led Financial Centers for Sustainability Network (UNDP-FC4S) and Vice-Chair of the World Alliance of International Financial Centers (WAIFC). Prior to that, Lamia was part of AKWA Group, the largest private group in Morocco, within which she held the position of Director of Strategy and Organization for 7 years. She was also a member of the executive committee and board member of 2 listed companies. Lamia is a graduate of ESSEC Business School and Harvard Business School. She started her career at Arthur Andersen in Paris as a banking, insurance, and industry consultant. Lamia worked on the Green Morocco Plan within the Ministry of Agriculture and on the development strategy of the Souss-Massa-Draa region. Lamia is also President of the We4She association, President of the Women Working for Change Network (Pan African network) and was recently nominated for the "Best Woman Leader in Africa" Award by the Africa Investments Forum and Awards. Lamia is also certified IMA (Moroccan Institute of Directors), independent administrator of several companies, executive coach (individual and team coaching), and has been practicing yoga and meditation for more than 15 years.



**Lamia Merzouki**  
*Chief Operating Officer*  
CASABLANCA  
FINANCE CITY AUTHORITY  
Casablanca, Morocco

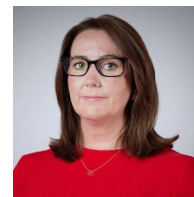
9.40 – 10.20

### ENERGY & RENEWABLES

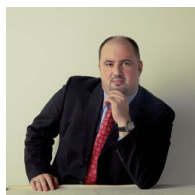
Investing in green energy projects like wind, solar, hydro, hydrogen, and geothermal power in Africa and the Middle East presents unique opportunities and risks. These regions offer favorable conditions for renewable energy but face challenges such as high initial costs, infrastructure needs, government interference and environmental concerns. Effective risk management involves thorough due diligence, understanding local regulations, and engaging with stakeholders. Strategies like securing government support and forming international partnerships and effective consortiums can help mitigate these risks to ensure successful project outcomes.



**Boma Alabi**  
PRIMERA AFRICA  
LEGAL  
Lagos, Nigeria



**Paula Boast**  
*Africa & Middle East  
Regional Group Chair*  
CHARLES RUSSELL  
SPEECHLYS LLP  
Manama, Bahrain



**Salim Ali**  
AL-HAMAD LEGAL  
GROUP  
Safat, Kuwait

10.20 – 10.30

**BREAK**

10.30 – 11.10

**TECHNOLOGY, CYBER & DATA PROTECTION**

Technology, cyber, data protection and AI risks are critical concerns for institutional investors globally as they increasingly navigate complex digital landscapes. These risks encompass growth and developments in this arena coupled with potential cyberattacks, data breaches, and technology failures that can significantly impact business operations and financial stability. Effective risk management strategies include AI R&D, robust cybersecurity measures, comprehensive data protection protocols, and continuous monitoring of technological developments. Institutional investors must stay vigilant and proactive to safeguard their investments and maintain trust in an evolving digital environment.



**Mellisa Amarteifio**  
SAM OKUDZETO &  
ASSOCIATES  
Accra, Ghana



**Ombo Malumbe**  
O'BANG LAW  
Nairobi, Kenya



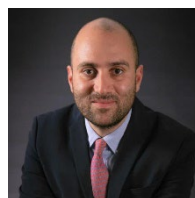
**Rohit Kochhar**  
KOCHHAR & CO. INC.  
Dubai, United Arab  
Emirates

11.10 – 11.50

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE APPLIED TO AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST  
LEGAL MARKET: AN EXAMPLE DEVELOPED BETWEEN WESTFIELD AND  
AIOX LABS**

Westfield is working in partnership with AIOX LABS on a dedicated tool for the middle east and African legal market that would provide high level analysis of contracts under local law for lawyers and legal departments.

This tool aims to transform the work of legal departments and law firms by using artificial intelligence to automate and accelerate contract analysis. Thanks to legal databases comprising law, doctrine and case law and with the help of advanced Large Language Models techniques, the tool simplifies and accelerates the completion of tedious legal tasks. As a result, legal teams can concentrate on high value-added tasks, freeing up value-added tasks, freeing up precious time.



**Wassim Benzarti**  
*Host Firm*  
WESTFIELD  
MOROCCO  
Rabat, Morocco



**Issam El Alaoui**  
AIOX LABS

11.50 – 12.00

**WHAT IS ALFA INTERNATIONAL AND HOW CAN IT BENEFIT MY COMPANY?**

ALFA International is a global network of independent law firms that can assist clients with a variety of legal needs. ALFA International CEO, Jessica Zaroski Bauer, will provide a brief overview of the network and representatives from the various Latin member firms will be in attendance to answer questions clients have regarding jurisdiction-specific concerns.



**Jessica Zaroski Bauer**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
ALFA INTERNATIONAL  
Chicago, IL, USA

12.00 – 13.00

**LUNCH**

Casablanca Marriott Hotel  
(Room TBD)

15.30 – 22.00

**MEDINA TOUR & DINNER/ENIGMES PARTY**

Attendees will board a bus at 15.30 to travel to the old town for a tour of the city and old town medina. The tour will conclude at 19.00 at a local restaurant for dinner and an Enigme show. The 45-minute show includes magical effects, mind reading, predictions, body language reading, influence demonstrations, and many other surprises

*Attire: Business casual attire, comfortable clothing is recommended.*



**FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER 2024**

8.00-9.00

**BREAKFAST**

Casablanca Marriott Hotel

Breakfast at your leisure is included in your hotel room rate.

9.00 – 13.00

**ALFAI ATTORNEY MEETING**

Casablanca Marriott Hotel

*(Room TBD)*

This meeting is intended to be an open forum discussion, so please come ready to express your thoughts and collaborate. If you have particular topics to request, please email them to [Paula Boast and Arielle Aaron](#). An agenda will be circulated in advance.

13:00

**ATTENDEES DEPART**



## SPEAKERS

**BOMA ALABI** is a founding Partner of ALFA International member firm Primera Africa Legal. Her experience in corporate commercial practice spans approximately thirty years. In addition to being an experienced Arbitrator and accredited Civil and Commercial Mediator, Boma specializes in International Tax Law, Maritime Law, Mergers & Acquisitions and Capital Market Transactions. She has advised on some of Nigeria's leading commercial deals in a number of sectors including real estate and infrastructure, manufacturing, banking, hospitality, telecommunications, maritime, energy, project funding and development.

**SALIM ALI** is a Partner at ALFA International member firm Al-Hamad Legal Group in Kuwait. He has more than 20 years of experience in commercial and corporate law in over 25 countries worldwide. Salim has extensive experience with mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, government contracts and international transactions from all phases, including due diligence, deal structuring, management of the investments and final liquidation and exit. His expertise extends to many aspects of foreign joint ventures, including their creation, management, and disposition. He has also been involved in the creation or acquisition of subsidiaries or joint ventures in most of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. He also provides clients with extensive international tax experience, including structuring investment funds and entities with an investment focus on and portfolio investments in the United States, Europe, Middle East and North Africa and the GCC states.

**JESSICA ZAROSKI BAUER** joined ALFA International (ALFAI) in 2004 as a Coordinator of Events & Member Services. She then worked for several years as a Marketing Manager, Chief Events Officer and Chief Operating Officer. After 17 years with the association, she accepted her current role as Chief Executive Officer. In this position she is the strategic thought leader of the organization, working closely with the Board of Directors and the various ALFAI committees. She manages headquarters staff and maintains constant communication with association members. Jessica oversees the member recruitment, development and retention programs as well as the marketing and business development initiatives for the organization. Prior to joining ALFA International, she worked in the marketing department of the Chicago-based law firm of Gardner, Carton & Douglas, LLP (now Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath). She is a graduate of the University of Iowa Tippie College of Business (Go Hawkeyes!) and is an avid college football fan. In her spare time Jessica can be found enjoying family time with her husband Harry and her two young daughters, Greta and Vivian.

**WASSIM BENZARTI** is Managing Partner with ALFA International firm Westfield Morocco in Rabat, Morocco. Wassim collaborates with companies to enable them to take a step forward: either by restructuring to be more efficient, or by internationalizing by setting up abroad, or by opening their capital to new investors or in external growth operations via acquisitions or mergers.

**PAULA BOAST** is Head of Construction Engineering & Projects with ALFA International member firm Charles Russell Speechlys in Bahrain. She has lived and worked in the Middle East region since 2006 and specializes in construction projects, with a focus on Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. Her extensive experience includes real estate and development, regeneration, infrastructure and utilities, renewable energy, power and water, oil and gas, hotels, leisure and tourism, industrial and commercial, education and healthcare. She operates in both the private and public sectors acting on behalf of government and regulatory clients, including the Ministry of Works and Ministry of Finance, as well as project employers and developers, lenders and investors, contractors, subcontractors, consultants and specialized procurement and supply chain. Paula is a 360-degree projects lawyer who conducts both contentious and non-contentious work. She is an International FIDIC Contracts specialist. She assisted the Bahrain Ministry of Works in the drafting and publication to market of its

first-ever Standard Suite of Construction Contracts (2009 Edition) based on FIDIC forms. Her work includes front-end project suite preparation and procurement for PPP and PFI projects, EPC, design and build as well as contract claims administration, advisory and dispute resolution. She is renowned for her work in the ADR arena, including being an accredited Mediator with the Bahrain Chamber for Dispute Resolution. She is extremely experienced in the Middle East local and multi-jurisdictional litigation and arbitrations, including UNCITRAL, ICC, DIFC, QFC, BCDR and LCIA.

**ISSAM EL ALAOUI** is a graduate of the Ecole Polytechnique in computer science and cryptography and holds a double master's degree from the Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées in numerical and financial statistics and from the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Cachan in statistical learning theory. After working as a Data Scientist with IT consultancy "OCTO Technology," he joined Morocco as Director of the Data lab at CIH Bank in 2016, before taking on responsibility in 2019 for leading the data and then transformation of the Attijariwafa bank group. Issam is currently a partner in the AIOX Labs studio and dedicates his time to creating start-ups. In his spare time, he writes articles on his blog [issam.ma](http://issam.ma) about various technological topics such as data analysis, public blockchains and cryptocurrencies.

**GRACE V.B. GARCIA**, a Partner in the Boston office of ALFA International member firm Morrison Mahoney LLP, concentrates her practice in the areas of product liability, construction law - including personal injury, construction defect, and contractual - OSHA, commercial litigation, employment litigation, premises liability and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) cases. Grace currently serves as Chair of ALFA International's Board of Directors and is a former Chair of both ALFA International's Construction Practice Group and Women's Initiative Practice Group. Grace has an AV Preeminent Rating from Martindale Hubbell and in 2020 she was honored by Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly with its "Circle of Excellence" after being honored in 2013 as a "Top Women of Law." Grace has over 25 years of trial practice and litigation experience and has obtained successful outcomes on behalf of her clients in both state and Federal Court trials. She also has successfully argued before the Appeals Court. Beyond ALFA, she is actively involved in many professional groups and is the Immediate Past-President of the Massachusetts Bar Association. Grace is also a past President of the Massachusetts Defense Lawyers Association and past DRI State Representative for Massachusetts. She is a routine lecturer on defending brain injuries, risk transfer and indemnity issues, best discovery practices and deposition techniques, and OSHA.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### MEETING LOCATION:

Casablanca Marriott Hotel  
100 Av. des FAR, Casablanca 20000, Morocco  
Tel: +212 5224-39494

[Website](#)



### REGISTRATION:

ATTENDANCE IS OPEN ONLY TO REGISTERED MEMBERS OF ALFA INTERNATIONAL AND THEIR INVITED GUESTS AND IS LIMITED TO AGES 21+.

### ATTIRE:

Attire for Wednesday's dinner and the meetings on Thursday and Friday is business attire, jacket or blazer is recommended. Thursday's Medina tour takes place outside, a coat or wrap is recommended as it will get cold after sunset.

### SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION

If you need any special accommodation, including a nursing room, special dietary meals, ADA access or other needs, please reach out to ALFA International staff in advance of the meeting. We will ensure that necessary accommodations are provided.

### REGIONAL SEMINAR CONTACT:

Arielle Aaron

[aaaron@alfainternational.com](mailto:aaaron@alfainternational.com)

Stay connected with ALFA International:

