

2026 African & Middle Eastern Regional Meeting

21-23 JANUARY | SHERATON BAHRAIN HOTEL | MANAMA, BAHRAIN



WEDNESDAY 21 JANUARY 2026



19.00 – 21.00 WELCOME RECEPTION AND DINNER
Sheraton Bahrain Hotel

Golestan Restaurant

The event will begin with a welcome reception and family style dinner for ALFAI attorneys, hosted at the Golestan Restaurant. This evening will provide an opportunity to network and enjoy a delicious array of local gourmet dishes in a sophisticated setting. Connect with peers and set the stage for a productive and insightful series of sessions ahead.

Attire: Business or smart casual attire is recommended.

THURSDAY 22 JANUARY 2026

7.00 – 8.45

BREAKFAST

Sheraton Bahrain Hotel

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

9.00 – 12.00

PROGRAM SESSIONS

Sheraton Bahrain Hotel

Meeting Room 2

Attire: Business casual 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



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

9.10 – 9.30

INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION - KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Construction projects whilst becoming more complex, are required to be completed within shorter timeframes (often referred to as fast-track projects) – which undoubtedly becomes the breeding ground for disputes. Today’s conversation is not about textbook answers or abstract theories, instead it is about dissecting what really happens on the ground and why the same issues keep resurfacing. Is it not time to move from the traditional adversarial approach to a more collaborative approach? More importantly, what should we as participants do to ensure collaborative contracting works?



Mark Watson
Managing Director
DESIMONE CONSULTING
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

9.30 – 10.05

ARBITRAL AWARDS & ENFORCEMENT

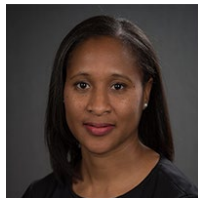
This panel will examine the enforceability of arbitral awards by the Courts in Nigeria, Ghana and Bahrain. It will consider the judiciary’s approach to enforcement and its broader stance toward Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). The discussion will provide practical insights into current practices, legal frameworks, and key considerations for parties involved in cross-border arbitration.



Boma Ayomide Alabi
PRIMERA AFRICA
LEGAL
Lagos, Nigeria



Paula Boast
CHARLES RUSSEL
SPEECHLYS
Manama, Bahrain



Esine Okudzeto
SAM OKUDZETO
& ASSOCIATES
Accra, Ghana

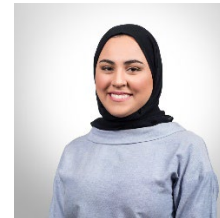
10.05 – 10.25

DOING BUSINESS IN BAHRAIN - KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Description coming



Mohammed Al Madani
Business Development Director
BAHRAIN EDB
Manama, Bahrain



Rana Mohammed Ali
Head of International Offices
BAHRAIN EDB
Manama, Bahrain

10.25 – 10.40

BREAK

10.40 – 11.15

TAX ISSUES – CROSS-BORDER CONTEXTS

This session will explore cross-border tax challenges under Kuwaiti, Kenyan, and Dubai law, with a focus on double taxation agreements, withholding tax, and compliance requirements for foreign entities. Speakers will provide practical insights on structuring transactions to minimize risk while ensuring alignment with both local and international standards.



Ombo Malumbe
O'BANG LAW
Nairobi, Kenya



Dania Tyan
AL-HAMAD LEGAL
GROUP
Safat, Kuwait

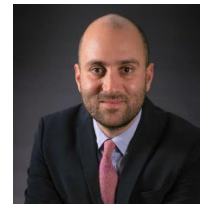
11.15 – 12.00

**SECURITIES & EQUITY – HOW TO REGISTER & ENFORCE
SECURITIES EFFECTIVELY**

This session will explore how securities and equity interests are registered and enforced across various jurisdictions, with insights from Mauritius, the UAE, Morocco, Kuwait, and others. Speakers will address the Mauritian framework for securing interests in shares, movable and immovable property, and the role of registration with public registries. From a UAE perspective, the discussion will highlight whether security can be created directly in favor of a foreign financial institution or if a security agency structure is required. The session will also examine enforcement mechanisms in the event of default, including judicial remedies and receiverships, while considering cross-border issues and best practices to strengthen creditor protection without undermining commercial flexibility.



Jana Mulla Ali
AL-HAMAD LEGAL
GROUP
Safat, Kuwait



Wassim Benzarti
WESTFIELD
Rabat, Morocco



Carlyn Lobo
KOCHHAR & CO.
Dubai, United Arab
Emirates

12.00 – 12.10

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 Africa & Middle East 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

12.10 – 13.00

LUNCH

Mezzanine & WILD restaurant

14.00 – 17.00

DISCOVER THE HEART OF BAHRAIN'S HERITAGE: THE PEARLING PATH



Join us on the Pearl Path tour for a captivating journey through Bahrain's storied pearl-diving legacy and vibrant urban heritage. As you follow the trail through the historic city of Muharraq, you'll trace the arc from the oyster beds and bustling seaside docks to the elegant merchant homes, lively souqs, and public squares where communities gathered. Along the way, you'll encounter beautifully restored architecture, hear stories of the divers and traders who built Bahrain's pearling industry, and experience how the past continues to live on in the present day.

Transportation: Please meet in the lobby at 13.45 for the 15-minute bus ride to the Pearl Path.

Attire: Casual or Athleisure attire, comfortable clothing & shoes are recommended.

19.00 – 22.00

AN EVENING AT CUT BAHRAIN BY WOLFGANG PUCK



Join us for an evening that will offer attendees an opportunity to connect with colleagues while enjoying a thoughtfully prepared menu featuring signature dishes from Wolfgang Puck's celebrated culinary team. With panoramic views of Manama's skyline as the backdrop, the dinner provides an inviting atmosphere to share meaningful conversations, exchange ideas, and strengthen professional and personal connections.

Transportation: Please meet in the lobby at 18.45 for the 10-minute bus ride to the dinner location.

Attire: Smart casual attire, dress tops and casual pants are recommended.

FRIDAY 23 JANUARY 2026

8.00-9.00

BREAKFAST

Sheraton Bahrain Hotel

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

9.00 – 12.00

ALFAI ATTORNEY MEETING

Charles Russell Speechlys Office

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 [Halle Sweis](#). An agenda will be circulated in advance.

Attire: Business casual attire.

12:00

ATTENDEES DEPART



GENERAL INFORMATION

MEETING LOCATION:

Sheraton Bahrain Hotel
6 Palace Avenue, P.O. Box 30
Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain
Tel: +973 17-533533

[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 dinner on Wednesday and Thursday is business or smart casual. The meetings on Thursday and Friday are business casual attire, jacket or blazer is recommended. The Thursday activity is outdoors and casual. Wear comfortable walking shoes and 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 accommodation is provided.

REGIONAL SEMINAR CONTACT:

HALLE SWEIS

Practice Group & Events Coordinator

ALFA International

980 North Michigan Avenue | Suite 1180

Chicago, IL 60611

D: 312.642.2178 | E: hsweis@alfainternational.com



SPEAKERS

BOMA AYOMIDE 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.

RANA MOHAMMED ALI (*biography coming*)

JANA MULLA ALI (*biography coming*)

MOHAMMED AL MADANI (*biography coming*)

PAULA BOAST is Head of Construction Engineering & Projects with ALFA International member firm Charles Russell Speechlys LLC 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.

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.

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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 ALFAI, 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.

YUVRAJ JUWAHEER is Managing Partner at ALFA International member firm YKJ Legal in the Republic of Mauritius. He was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple in London and is a member of Society of Trusts and Estate Practitioners, an Associate of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators and a member of the International Fiscal Association. Yuvraj has more than 20 years of experience in the global business sector in Mauritius. He has extensive experience in investment funds, corporate and commercial law, regulatory matters and banking and finance.

CARLYN LOBO is an associate partner at ALFA International firm Kochhar & Co. His practice areas include corporate law, banking, finance, mergers and acquisitions, commercial disputes and compliance. He regularly advises foreign clients on establishment of a presence in the UAE, employment law matters, liaising with Government Authorities to obtain approvals and permissions to ensure compliance with local law. He has advised clients on regulatory and compliance issues both under UAE law and DIFC law. Carlyn is registered with the Government of Dubai – Legal affairs Department as a legal consultant authorized to practice UAE law.

OMBO MALUMBE is a partner and Co-Founder at O'Bang Law, ALFA International member firm in Kenya. Ombo Malumbe leads his law firm's corporate, commercial, and cross-border practice wing. He has advised on both complex and average transactions while applying an unbiased level of professionalism. He has covered advisories and transactions in areas such as approvals and licensing from Capital Markets/ Securities, the Central Bank of Kenya fintech regulations, Competition Authority, and the Communication Authority. He handles corporate and tax structuring, corporate governance, and regulatory compliance, corporate immigration, transfer pricing, intellectual property transactions, real estate transactions, economic processing zone (EPZ) companies, and transactions, to mention a few.

ESINE OKUDZETO is the Deputy Managing Partner at ALFA International member firm Sam Okudzeto & Associates. Her focus is on Mergers and Acquisitions, Capital Markets, Oil and Gas law, Corporate Law, Commercial law, Labour law, Intellectual Property and Arbitration. Esine has performed due diligence for several international clients and has advised several others on mergers and acquisitions in Ghana. Esine played a leading role in a Fortune 500 company's acquisition of Unilever Plc's oil palm business in Ghana. Esine was also the lead transactional advisor for the creation of a joint venture that set up a cargo hub, a warehouse, and a handling service at the Kotoka International Airport. In all these transactions, Esine was instrumental in the incorporation of companies, the negotiation and drafting of licensing agreements, the drafting of shareholders agreements, the drafting of leases and company regulations, the registration of trademarks, the registration of leases, as well as advising on tax and labour issues.

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DANIA TYAN is a Senior Legal Consultant at ALFA International member firm Al-Hamad Legal Group in Kuwait. Dania holds a Law degree with a concentration in French and Lebanese Law, Sagesse University, Beirut Lebanon. Dania was admitted to the Beirut Bar Association in 2000. She Joined Al Hamad Legal Group in 2019. She has a broad-based practice related primarily to international corporate and commercial transactions, with particular emphasis on foreign direct investments. She advised and assisted in all aspects of banking, investment, and finance matters including drafting various loan, credit, and facility agreements, conducting company mergers and major acquisitions and asset purchases, joint ventures, government contracts, and international transactions from all phases including due diligence, deal structuring, management of the investments and IPO. In addition to advising on labor law matters for the private sector and individuals. Dania is fluent in Arabic - French and English.

MARK WATSON is a dual-qualified construction professional and Managing Director of the Construction Consulting practice at DeSimone Consulting Engineering, based in Dubai. In addition, Mark leads the global delay and programming team, advising on construction disputes and providing expert testimony in adjudication, arbitration, and litigation. Accredited by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors as a mediator, Mark specialises in conflict resolution. He also serves as an arbitrator for the Master Builders Association of Western Cape and the Arbitration Foundation of Southern Africa and has represented parties in construction claim disputes under various major contract forms. As an academic, Mark created and taught a course on contract performance and delays for the University of Pretoria's Post Graduate Program in Construction Adjudication and continues to deliver training on FIDIC contract management.

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.