

NYU Teams Excel in International Arbitration Moot Competition

By Wangui W. Kaniaru '07

NYU School of Law gave a strong performance at the recently concluded Willem C. Vis International Arbitration Moot Competition in Vienna and Hong Kong. The Moot featured more than 200 universities from all over the world. Both NYU teams successfully advanced through four rounds of competition, marking the first time for NYU to have two teams place in the top 10 at both the Vis Moot East and the Vis Moot Vienna. In addition to Honorable Mentions for their separate written submissions, several members of both teams were recognized for outstanding advocacy skills. Rashida Allie (LLM '07), Philipp Groz (LLM '07), Michael Howe (LLM '07), Wangui Kaniaru (JD '07), Rahim Moloo (LLM '07), Jeena Shah (JD '07), Stacia Sowerby (JD '08), and Ramona Vijeyarasa (LLM '07) participated in the moot. The competitions took place from March 19 - 25 in Hong Kong and March 31 - April 5 in Vienna.

Jocelyn Burgos (LLM '06), who had previously participated in the Vis Moot, coached the Hong Kong team. In addition, Flavia Mange (LLM '07) provided extensive research assistance during the drafting of written submissions and preparation for oral arguments. "The Moot was definitely one of the highlights of my time at NYU," said Mange. Mange, who is currently writing a dissertation on interim measures in litigation and arbitration in Brazil, noted that the level of arbitrator panelists and student advocacy was illuminating. "Being part of a team inspired me to pursue establishing a Vis team in Sao Paulo when I return to complete my Masters at the Universidade de Sao Paulo," she said. Inaugurated in 2004, the rapidly growing Vis Moot East in Hong Kong featured 48 universities from Australia, the U.S., Canada, Germany, Brazil, Thailand, India, Indonesia, Japan, and Korea. In addition to advancing to the final elimination rounds, the team, featuring Allie, Kaniaru, Shah, and Sowerby, placed second out of 48 schools in the general rounds. All four participants also received Honorable Mentions for outstanding advocacy skills. "In a field that has traditionally been dominated by men, it was very empowering to be part of a sixwoman team in Hong Kong and perform so well," Shah said. "Participating in the Vis Moot refined my brief writing and oral advocacy skills in a way that no law school class had been able to do, and opened up a legal field to me that is not really emphasized in the law school curriculum."

Giorgio Mandelli (LLM '07), who previously participated as an arbitrator and coach while working as an international arbitration solicitor in London, coached the Vienna team. In its 14th year of existence, the Vienna Moot featured a record number of 177 teams from universities from all over Europe, North America, Brazil, Asia and Australia. The NYU team, featuring Groz, Howe, Moloo, and Vijeyarasa, placed 11th in the general rounds and, ultimately tied for ninth place in the final rounds. In addition, Groz and Vijeyarasa received Honorable Mentions for outstanding advocacy skills. "As a Swiss-trained lawyer, the Moot was a great opportunity to develop my advocacy skills in English," Groz noted. "It also gave me valuable first-hand experience in understanding

the different approaches lawyers trained in civil law and common law jurisdictions bring to the same issues.”

“The Vis Moot in Vienna was definitely the highlight of my year,” Howe noted. “I started this process in September knowing nothing about international sales or commercial arbitration. I left Vienna with a great deal more knowledge, a new-found confidence in my oral advocacy skills, and a large new group of friends from around the world. I would recommend the experience to anyone,” Howe said. Named after the late Willem Cornelis Vis, Executive Secretary of the Vienna Diplomatic Conference that created the UN Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (CISG), the Vis Moot aims to promote the study and practice of international commercial arbitration. Students prepare written submissions and oral arguments on a legal problem applying the CISG and other uniform commercial law in the context of arbitration. The long-running competition has been the basis of international arbitration seminars at various schools, where students participate in a semester-long research, writing, and oral advocacy course in preparation for the Moot. NYU’s team was selected in September 2006 and prepared independently while being coached by current and former students.

The teams benefited from practice rounds featuring NYU faculty, including Professor Linda Silberman, and visiting professors, adjunct faculty, and experts in the field, including Professors Janet Walker, Richard Hulbert, Loukas Mistelis and Franco Ferrari. Former Vis participants and coaches, including Joanna McGinley (LLM ’06), Quang Trinh (LLM ’06), Jean Ho (LLM ’08), and Yulia Andreeva (LLM ’04) also provided valuable assistance. Team members participated in several practice moots in various locations in the city, including Skadden Arps, Clifford Chance, Debevoise & Plimpton and Fordham University School of Law, featuring diverse panels comprised of various faculty and practitioners around the city.