

Personal Note

Christophe Bernasconi
Secretary General

Hans van Loon, Secretary General of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (1996 – 2013), retired on 30 June 2013 after more than 34 years at the Permanent Bureau.

He joined the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on 15 September 1978 and became its Secretary General on 30 June 1996. He guided the Organisation during a time of global expansion and transformation. His enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to the work of the organisation played a large part in the exponential growth of the organisation over the last three decades.

Hans made an invaluable contribution to the development of more than ten international Conventions⁴⁸ at the Hague Conference in all three areas of work of the organisation. In the area of the international protection of children, family and property relations, he was the driving force behind the 1993 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, undertaking the crucial research and consensus-building work. He travelled all over the world to involve as many countries as possible in the development of the treaty,

⁴⁸ *Convention of 25 October 1980 on International Access to Justice; Convention of 1 July 1985 on the Law Applicable to Trusts and on their Recognition; Convention of 22 December 1986 on the Law Applicable to Contracts for the International Sale of Goods; Convention of 1 August 1989 on the Law Applicable to Succession to the Estates of Deceased Persons; Convention of 19 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption; Convention of 19 October 1996 on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children; Convention of 13 January 2000 on the International Protection of Adults; Convention of 5 July 2006 on the Law Applicable to Certain Rights in Respect of Securities held with an Intermediary; Revision of the Statute of the Hague Conference (effective 1 January 2007); Convention of 23 November 2007 on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance; and the Protocol of 23 November 2007 on the Law Applicable to Maintenance Obligations.*

and lead the drafting of what has become one of the most important and widely ratified Conventions (today it has 90 States Parties). He also helped to develop Conventions in the areas of international legal co-operation and litigation and international commercial and financial law.

Hans studied at the Universities of Utrecht and Leiden, as well as the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva. Following a traineeship with the Council of Europe (European Commission of Human Rights), he was admitted to the Bar in The Hague and practiced law, acting also before the European Court of Human Rights (case of *Winterwerp v. The Netherlands*, 1979, 1981). Until 1996, he combined his work at the Hague Conference with his role as Executive Secretary of the Netherlands Standing Government Committee on Private International Law, where he initiated, and was responsible for, the scientific organisation of the Committee's work on the codification of private international law in the Netherlands (which would ultimately lead to Book 10 of the Civil Code).

He has widely published on numerous topics of private international law. He is a doctor *honoris causa* of the University of Osnabrück (Germany, 2001). He was also an expert consultant to other international organisations and to the Governments of many countries. He was elected an Associate Member of the *Institut de Droit International* (2009). He has been a Member of the European Group of Private International Law since its inception (1991), and is an honorary Member of the *Asociación Americana de Derecho Internacional Privado* (ASADIP, 2007).

Hans van Loon's colleagues will miss him deeply but feel very privileged to have worked with him. His vision, legal knowledge, sensitivity and integrity were vital for the work of the organisation. In addition, his dedication and commitment to international family law, in particular, led to the creation and successful operation of treaties which improve the lives of families and children on a daily basis.



Former Secretary General Hans van Loon.