

in this issue >>>

- AfIELN highlights
- Introduction of new Executive Team and the Virtual Colloquium Planning Committee
- Recent and upcoming events and publications
- Call for Papers



NEWSLETTER



December 2020

The AfIELN is a regional network under the auspices of the Society of International Economic Law (SIEL). AfIELN is an organisation aimed at academics, industry practitioners, policy experts and officials with interest in the field of International Economic Law (IEL) in Africa.

Should you wish to include an item in the next AfIELN newsletter, please contact us:

afielnnews@gmail.com

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Highlights Launches

Afronomics law introduced a new initiative called the [African Sovereign Debt Justice Network, \(AfSDJN\)](#). The network's primary objective is to undertake research, advocacy, tactics and strategies around the changing nature of debt, globally and in Africa, which threatens economic development, social cohesion and several gains made in building social contracts in recent years.

SIEL has launched SIEL Conversations, a monthly webinar on international economic law. Five events have been held so far and are now available on the new SIEL Youtube Channel including 'The origin and evolution of investment treaty standards', 'Teaching International Economic Law in a changing world', 'African Continental FTA in an era of waning multilateralism', and 'COVID-19 and its impacts on the Belt and Road Initiative'.



A new Executive Committee is constituted

Welcome note

AfIELN welcomes the new Executive Committee for the 2020 – 2022 term. Dr Amaka Vanni, Dr Titilayo Adebola and Ms Patricia Ouma effectively began their tenure on 1 July 2020. The trio are looking forward to amplifying African voices in international economic law even further, and specifically in response to the current global health crisis.



In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, the next few years provide an opportunity to explore Africa's experiences and responses in all aspects of its economic, political and social development. The executive team looks forward to initiating and furthering these conversations in a bid to design practical solutions that can benefit the continent. The Executive Committee continues to count on the experience of the previous team which is now part of the AfIELN Advisory Board.

Thank you from the new Execs!

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Executive Committee of 2018-2020 for all the time and effort put into a worthy project such as AfIELN. We are proud to follow in your footsteps, and appreciate your continued support and encouragement.

Welcome message from the President

Dear AfIELN Members,

It is my pleasure to write to you as your President for the 2020-2022 term. The new executive teams comprising of myself, Dr. Titilayo Adebola (Treasurer), and Ms. Patricia Ouma (Secretary) took over from July 1, 2020 and we would like to thank the past executive members, our partners at Afronomicslaw.org and the AfIELN community who have all worked hard in the past year to actively grow our Network. This year, we inaugurated a new Advisory Board, comprising of all the past presidents, individuals previously involved with the establishment of the Network and/or play a prominent role in their substantive fields of scholarship on the continent. The members of the board are Caroline Ncube, Franziska Sucker, Jumoke Oduwole, Tomer Broude, James Gathii, Markus Wagner, Olabisi Akinkugbe, Ohio Ominu, Sara Ghebremusse, Luwam Dirar, Regis Semo, Ashimizo Afadameh, Ms. Jill Juma, and Mr. Suresh Nanwani. The role of the advisory board is to provide counsel and support towards the growth of the Network. We are also in the process of completing a new functional permanent AfIELN Website and we will let you know once the website is live.

Within Africa, a lot has been going on to deepen trade relations both within and outside the continent. Mauritius signed a free trade agreement with China; Kenya commenced trade negotiations with the US; Tunisia requested the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) to establish a panel to examine anti-dumping duties imposed by Morocco, and Nigeria's Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala emerged a frontrunner to become the first African, and first woman to lead the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The significance of these events cannot be overemphasized and as Africa continues to develop its voice and contributions to IEL governance and scholarship, we hope that AfIELN will continue to provide the space for rigorous analysis and scholarship on international economic law issues as they relate to Africa. In this spirit of building and nurturing these conversations and bearing in mind the uncertainty surrounding air travel as a result of COVID-19, we will hold a virtual colloquium themed 'COVID-19 and International Economic Law: Africa's Experiences and Responses' in lieu of our Fifth Biennial Conference. Our Call for Paper is now available on the SIEL website and our social media handles. We look forward to you joining us virtually next year.

Lastly, we know this year has been really tough for all our members as a result of COVID-19. Many lost loved ones, jobs and funding opportunities, and the future remains uncertain. I hope you are finding comfort in something positive. I hope you take the time in the upcoming holiday season to do things that refresh your soul and nourish your spirit. This year has been hard; we all deserve a break and we should not feel guilty about it. Let us be gentle with ourselves even as we recount a year that did not go according to our plans. In light of everything going on, I would like to leave you with a quote I've been thinking about for a while now:

"You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own." – Michelle Obama

Here is to better and brighter 2021!

Sincerely,
Amaka Vanni, President, AfIELN.

The team



Dr Amaka Vanni



Dr Titilayo Adebola



Ms Patricia Ouma

Dr Vanni is the current President of the African International Economic Law Network (AfIELN) and a Lecturer in Law at the University of Leeds (UK), where she is affiliated with the [Centre for Business Law and Practice \(CBLP\)](#) and [Centre for Law and Social Justice](#). Her work lies at the intersection of international economic law, law and development, and global political economy. Her research and teaching are on intellectual property law, international trade law, philanthro-capitalism, critical legal theory and global governance.

What skill would you like to learn? I'm ashamed to say it but I don't know how to ride a bicycle. Growing up I was so scared of falling and hurting myself, so I never learned how to ride. Though the fear is still there, however, with everything 2020 has thrown at us I've made a mental note to learn this before my next birthday.

What is the last book you read that change your mind about something? I'm currently working my way through 'Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women and Queer Radicals' by Sadiya Hartman. I'm halfway through it but this genre-bending, stunning piece of work is teaching me so much about freedom, resistance, love, and what it means to write across genres and disciplines!

Dr Adebola is the Treasurer of AfIELN. She is a Lecturer in Law, Theme Coordinator for Intellectual Property Law, and Associate Director, Centre for Commercial Law at the University of Aberdeen. Her expertise is in International Economic Law, particularly, Intellectual Property Law and Food/Agriculture Law, which she actively researches and teaches. Dr Adebola is a Senior Advisor to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. She creates, curates and circulates knowledge in her areas of expertise through [Afronomicslaw.org](#) and [Flora IP](#). Dr Adebola received her LLM and PhD from the University of Warwick. She is dually qualified as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

What skill would you like to learn? I would like to be proficient in more languages. I speak only Yoruba, English, and *un peu* French. I am fascinated by how polyglots switch languages during conversations.

Which highly acclaimed person would you like to meet in your lifetime? Ms Olufunmilola Aduke Iyanda. I admire how she authentically and unapologetically practices journalism by illuminating often unexplored or underexplored topics that affect everyday lives of Nigerians and Africans.

Ms Patricia is the Secretary of AfIELN. She is a PhD Candidate at Leiden University researching on executive control and institutional balance in the proposed East African Political Confederation. She is affiliated with the Leiden [Centre for Legal and Comparative Studies of the East African Community](#). She holds an LL.M in International Business Law from Catholic University of Lyon, and an LL.B from the University of Nairobi. Patricia is also an advocate of the High Court of Kenya.

What is the last book you read that change your mind about something? I read 'Fresh Water' by Akwaeke Emezi a while ago but it has stuck with me to this day. The author's rich perspective on consciousness, spirituality and mental health has helped me appreciate things I may have otherwise not recognised because of a lack of understanding. She certainly has a creative way of breaking difficult qualities down in story form and I can't wait to read her other works.

Which highly acclaimed person would you like to meet in your lifetime? Sir David Attenborough. His creative and entertaining documentaries have allowed me to appreciate the importance of preserving nature and combatting climate change.

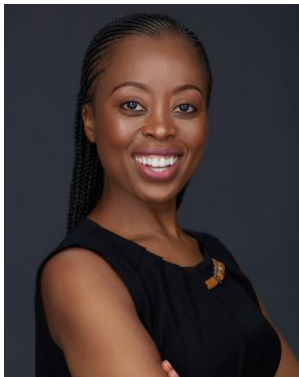
AfIELN also welcomes the Virtual Colloquium Planning Committee

The Virtual Colloquium Planning Committee is composed of a special group of IEL experts. AfIELN welcomes them onboard and is grateful for their commitment towards empowering African IEL.



Prof. Tomasz Milej is an academician specialising in international law, regional integration law and comparative constitutional law. After completing legal studies in Poland and in Germany, he occupied a lecturer position at the University of Cologne, where he obtained a PhD in law in 2006 and a postdoctoral degree (habilitation) in 2014. In the same year he assumed a position of a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) long-term lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam School of Law. Since 2016, Tomasz has been a Professor at the Kenyatta University School of Law in Nairobi. He is also a Supervisor at the Kenyatta University-Tradelab Law Clinic.

Who is your favourite book character? Kya from the novel 'Where the Crawdads Sing'. The story is about a ten year old girl who is abandoned by her family. She grows up in a marsh in harmony with nature, and defies the hostile village environment assisted by a few good souls. It is a great reading experience that reveals how worrying times can turn into admirable moments.



Dr Tsotang Tsietsi is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Private Law at the National University of Lesotho. She holds an LL.B from the same university and an LL.M in International Economic Law from the University of Cambridge. Tsotang has recently completed a Ph.D at the University of Cape Town. Her thesis focuses on trade facilitation in Southern Africa. Tsotang researches in, and has published on, international trade and investment law. She has consultancy experience, primarily in trade in services.

What is the latest book you read that changed your mind about something? "Closing the Gap: The Fourth Industrial Revolution in Africa" by Professor Tshilidzi Marwala. It changed my mind (positively so) about the impact of the fourth industrial revolution on the African continent. I am able to see more opportunities than challenges.

What skill would you like to learn? Dancing!! I have two left feet!



Jacqueline Mwangi is a doctoral candidate at Harvard Law School. Her interests lie at the intersection of law, technology and innovation theories, and political economy. Her doctoral work centers on the historical and current trends of technological change in Sub-Saharan African societies, and its evolving relationship with rules and institutions, the state, and society. Jacqueline holds a Master of Laws Degree from Harvard Law School, a Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice from Kenya School of Law, and a Bachelor of Laws Degree from Kenyatta University, Kenya.

What is the latest book you read that changed your mind about something?

"Decolonising the Mind" by Ngugi wa Thiong'o. It changed my outlook on everything.

Who is your favourite fictional character? Alicia Florrick from the 'The Good Wife'!

What we've been up to...

Recent and upcoming publications and events

Dr Amaka Vanni, AfIELN President and Law Lecturer at the University of Leeds (UK) published a book, **'Patent Games in the Global South: Pharmaceutical Patent Law-Making in Brazil, India and Nigeria'**. The book makes an original and useful contribution to the further understanding of how both states and non-state actors conceptualise, establish and interpret pharmaceutical patents law, and its domestic implications on medicines access, public health and development. *Patent Games in the Global South* was awarded the 2018 SIEL-Hart Prize in International Economic Law.

Prof. James Thuo Gathii, Professor of Law and the Wing-Tat Lee Chair in International Law at Loyola University, Chicago School of Law, published his new edited book titled **'The Performance of Africa's International Courts: Using Litigation for Political, Legal, and Social Change'**. The book discusses every international court in Africa and shows how litigants use their participation in international litigation to achieve other objectives such as amplifying political disputes with their governments, building their movement, educating the public about their cause, and challenging the status quo.

Dr Olabisi Akinkugbe, Assistant Professor at Dalhousie University, Schulich School of Law, published an article in the ICSID Review titled **'Reverse contributors? African State Parties, ICSID and the development of International Investment Law'**. The article discusses the role that African States have played in the development of ICSID case law and international investment laws in general.

Dr Regis Simo, Senior Researcher at University of Witwatersrand, published an article, **'The African Continental Free Trade Area in a Stagnating Multilateral Trading System: On the Likely (Ir)relevance of the Enabling Clause'** in the *The Italian Yearbook of International Law Online*. The article focuses on the African Continental Free Trade Area and the WTO Protocol on Trade in Goods against the practice of African Regional Trade Agreements and their reliance on the Enabling Clause.

Dr Titilayo Adebola, AfIELN Treasurer and Lecturer in Law at the University of Aberdeen, published an article titled **'Africa and Intellectual Property Rights for Plant Varieties'** in *Oxford Bibliographies in International Law*. The article discusses the complexities, conflicts and conceptual indeterminacies underpinning intellectual property rights for plant varieties alongside Africa's untoward trajectory on the subject.

Prof. Obiora C. Okafor, York Research Chair in International Legal Studies at Osgoode Hall Law School, published a book titled **'Refugee Law after 9/11: Sanctuary and Security in Canada and the United States'**. It analyses how the responses of the two countries, including heightened security and more pronounced security anxieties, compare in terms of refugee rights.



Upcoming Events

- **African International Economic Law Network Virtual Colloquium – COVID-19 and International Economic Law: Africa's Experiences and Responses (23 – 24 July, 2021)**
- **Peter A. Allard, School of Law, UBC and Liu Institute Network for Africa Virtual Conference – Re-imagining Agenda 2063: A Socio-Legal Foundation of the**

Afronomicslaw held a plethora of [online symposia](#) throughout the year, including **'Global Value Chains, Trade and Development.'** This was the outcome of a workshop on 'GVCs, Trade and Development' hosted by the Kent Law School and IEL collective in July 2020 and supported by the British Academy. The workshop engaged with the Global Value Chain Development reports of the WTO and World Bank to explore multilateral trade law that is more supportive of the well-being of actors involved in value chain trade.

CALL FOR PAPERS



AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC LAW NETWORK VIRTUAL COLLOQUIUM – COVID-19 AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC LAW: AFRICA’S EXPERIENCES AND RESPONSES

AfIELN will hold a virtual colloquium under the theme "COVID-19 and International Economic Law: Africa's Experiences and Responses" on **23-24 July 2021**. The Colloquium will address the economic and social ramifications of the pandemic in Africa by examining the mechanisms employed in the continent to deal with this issue, and in particular relating to international economic law.

The Colloquium Planning Committee welcomes submissions of abstracts by graduate students, early career and established scholars as well as practitioners in the private and public sector whose work relates directly or indirectly to this theme. The submission deadline is **31 December 2020**. More details can be found by following this [link](#).

PETER A. ALLARD, SCHOOL OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLOMBIA AND LIU INSTITUTE NETWORK FOR AFRICA VIRTUAL CONFERENCE – RE- IMAGINING AGENDA 2063: A SOCIO-LEGAL FOUNDATION OF THE AFRICA WE WANT (21 -25 JUNE, 2021)

This Conference will interrogate empirical and indigenous foundations for the conceptualization of Africa's development challenges as the basis for enhancing legal pathways to development challenges in Africa.

The conference organizers invite submissions that re-imagine the sociolegal foundation of development in Africa in order to rethink old challenges and find new pathways for transforming the continent. The submission deadline is **31 January 2021**. More information can be found on this [link](#).