

Astrid Wiik

# *Amicus Curiae* before International Courts and Tribunals



**Nomos**



## Successful Dispute Resolution

edited by

Professor Dr. Dres. h.c. Burkhard Hess,  
Max Planck Institute Luxembourg for International,  
European and Regulatory Procedural Law, Luxembourg

em. Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Professor Rüdiger Wolfrum,  
Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the  
Rule of Law, Heidelberg

Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. Thomas Pfeiffer, Institute for  
Comparative Law, Conflict of Laws and International  
Business Law, Heidelberg University

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Astrid Wiik

*Amicus Curiae* before  
International Courts and Tribunals



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*To my family*



## Preface

At first sight, one might expect that all legal systems are firmly based on fundamental concepts, implemented by settled institutions. However, in actuality, these preconditions are usually not met as the law is part of the societal, economic and political reality of a broader environment, reflective of the status of and changes in human society in both history and modern times. This situation is especially true for public international law. Here, one fundamental issue concerns the status of actors in the international legal order: are only states and international organizations subjects of modern public international law? Or do we accept that other actors, like non-governmental organizations, multinational enterprises and individuals, enter the scene to vindicate their rights (and individual protections) at the international level? Much has been written about this subject and there is still much scholarship needed to assess the great changes in, and affecting, the international legal order at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The uncertainties of the current situation are also reflected in the practices of international courts and tribunals. The proliferation of these courts and tribunals over the last decades – not only with regard to the number of institutions but also in relation to the ever-growing corpus of case-law and practice – has been accompanied by a procedural phenomenon called “amicus curiae”. Although the concept as such is largely unsettled, it is often understood as a procedural vehicle for non-parties, often for non-state actors without legal standing, to influence the decision-making processes of international courts and tribunals by submitting written and – occasionally – even oral statements to those courts. The admissibility of these statements is being disputed, but there is a growing tendency of permitting these interventions, at least in investment arbitration and before human rights bodies. Much attention has been paid to this development which, at a procedural level, reflects the unsettled status of actors in modern public international law. At the same time, the expansion of the amicus curiae corresponds to the pursuit of more transparency in international dispute settlement and reflects the search for more legitimacy in international dispute resolution processes as a whole.

The PhD thesis of Astrid Wiik contributes to this ongoing debate in a remarkable way: She bases her analysis on a broad empirical research by

analysing the case law and the practice of several international courts (the ICJ, the ITLOS, the ECtHR) and dispute settlement bodies such as the WTO Appellate Body and investment arbitration. Her research question does not only ask about the different variations of the *amicus curiae*; Astrid Wiik also wants to know to what extent *amici curiae* really influence international dispute settlement processes and whether the expectation that their involvement in dispute resolution would improve the outcomes in a positive way is really justified. It does not come as a surprise that she comes up with a much more nuanced result than other studies in this field. Indeed, this PhD is the first on the *amicus curiae* phenomenon which is based on a comprehensive review of the practice of international courts and tribunals.

This PhD was written in the framework of the International Max Planck Research School on Successful Dispute Resolution. This Doctoral School was originally organized by the Institute for Comparative Law, and Business Law of the University of Heidelberg and the Max Planck Institute Heidelberg for Comparative Public Law and International Law. In the meantime, the Max Planck Institute Luxembourg for European, International and Regulatory Procedural Law joined the School, as did the Law Faculty of the University of Luxembourg. When she worked on her PhD, Astrid Wiik was strongly involved in the debates of the students and their supervisors; the School offered her the opportunity to spend some time at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague where she obtained many insights into the “real” world of international dispute settlement. Her study profited considerably from an academic environment which permitted her to engage in comparative research at different research centres in Europe (including Heidelberg, Cambridge and The Hague).

After several years of steady work, this PhD project has been successfully completed. This is a great moment, not only for the candidate, but also for the supervisor who has accompanied the author throughout the process. In the case of Astrid Wiik, it was my pleasure to see her research expanding and to share the upcoming results with Rüdiger Wolfrum as a co-supervisor. And I’m also glad to see that Astrid Wiik has started an academic career at Heidelberg University.

Luxembourg, 8 February 2018

*Burkhard Hess*

## Acknowledgments

This book is the outcome of a (long) journey that started at Heidelberg University in 2009, with a keen interest in the role and functioning of international courts and tribunals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in view of the changing landscape of actors in the international arena. The concept of *amicus curiae* was repeatedly mentioned in literature as a tool to improve international dispute settlement. However, case law from inter-state courts and the WTO Appellate Body indicated a strong suspicion of this instrument. The lack of a definition of the instrument before any of the international courts and tribunals reviewed when I first embarked on this topic did not contribute to its reputation. Accordingly, the study was based on two aims: first, to grasp the reality of *amicus curiae* before international courts and tribunals. Second, to contrast this reality – including the effectiveness of the instrument – with the expectations attributed to it. The dissertation was written between 2009 and 2014. For the publication, new developments until November 2016 were included. During the years of writing the dissertation and preparing the book, *amicus curiae* practice has continued to expand and solidify, and definitions of the concept before some courts and an increasing number of codifications were achieved. It is the hope that this book will make a humble contribution to the ongoing debates and codification efforts surrounding *amicus curiae*.

This endeavor would not have been possible without the continuous support of my supervisor Professor Burkhard Hess, to whom I am most indebted for his patient guidance and precious advice throughout the writing of the Ph.D. and until its publication. I am also deeply grateful to Professor Rüdiger Wolfrum for his highly valuable feedback on the Ph.D. (and general matters of academia). Without their directive encouragement and advice, I would not have embraced the excitement and uncertainties of an academic career. I would also like to thank Dr. Karin Oellers-Frahm for first pointing me to the topic and for sparking my interest in international dispute settlement.

Thanks to Professor Hess and Professor Wolfrum, I was accepted into the Graduate Academy on Successful Dispute Resolution and the International Max Planck Research School for Successful Dispute Resolution in International Law. Like the Institute for Comparative Law, Conflict of

Laws and International Business Law at Heidelberg University and the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, it provided an inspiring work environment in Heidelberg. I also had the pleasure to spend some time as a visiting fellow at the Lauterpacht Centre for International Law in Cambridge in the springs of 2010 and 2011, and I would like to thank its then Director Professor James Crawford and the staff and visitors at the Centre for their warm welcome. I am further indebted to my friends and former colleagues at the Permanent Court of Arbitration. The many discussions on and off topic with professors, friends and colleagues, as well as the overall vibrant research communities in Heidelberg, Cambridge, and The Hague formed a constant source of motivation and new insights into the field of international dispute settlement.

At all the mentioned places, friends and colleagues provided comments, encouragement and the requisite amount of humor and patience to make the experience worthwhile. I am particularly grateful to Natasa Mavronicola, Evgeniya Goriatcheva, Magdalena Słok-Wodkowska, Constanze von Roeder, Jara Mínguez, Naya Pessoa, Katharina Domke-Schmidt, Elisa Novic, Sonja Firl, Clemens Zick, Lisa Staben, Yanying Li, Andreas Laupp, Martin Doe, Margret Solveigardottir and Judith Ulshöfer for reading and commenting on chapters and outlines of the dissertation, for helping with IT and formatting matters, and for tea, cookies and encouragement.

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Words are insufficient to thank my extended family for the immense support and cheerleading that I have received from over the years. My parents' intellectual curiosity in this world, their humanist values and their love are key guideposts in my life, for which I am very grateful. My siblings have always been great companions, and I would like to thank them for their support and particularly Ivar for his help during the final stretch of the dissertation. I would also like to thank my Mexican family, Nora and Jorge Zertuche, and my Heidelberg family, Volker and Charlotte Soergel, for their interest in my work, their help and many happy hours and inspiring conversations. I would like to dedicate this book to them all.

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ACHR	American Convention on Human Rights
BIT	Bilateral Investment Treaty
CAFTA	Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement
CEJIL	Center for Justice and International Law
CIEL	Centre for International Environmental Law
DSU	Dispute Settlement Understanding
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ECtHR Rules	Rules of the European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FTC	Free Trade Commission (NAFTA)
FTC Note	FTC Note of Interpretation of Certain Chapter 11 Provisions
FTC Statement	FTC Statement on non-disputing party participation
GPI	Stichting Greenpeace International
IACtHR	Inter-American Court of Human Rights
IACtHR Rules	Rules of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights
IACtHR Statute	Statute of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICJ Rules	Rules of Procedure of the International Court of Justice
ICJ Statute	Statute of the International Court of Justice
ICSID	International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITLOS	International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

*Table of Abbreviations*

ITLOS Rules	Rules of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea
ITLOS Statute	Statute of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUSCT	Iran-United States Claims Tribunal
MIT	Multilateral investment treaty
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OAS	Organization of American States
PCA	Permanent Court of Arbitration
PCIJ	Permanent Court of International Justice
SCSL	Special Court for Sierra Leone
SPS Agreement	The WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
TBT Agreement	WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VCLT	Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties
WTO	World Trade Organization