



## Robert L. Houston

### Senior Associate

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## OVERVIEW

Robert Houston is an international arbitration associate who has acted for and against sovereign States and State-owned entities, major corporates, and other clients in complex cross-border matters with substantial amounts in dispute, including in international investment treaty and commercial arbitrations under the arbitral rules of the ICC, ICSID, SCC, SIAC, and UNCITRAL.

Robert is also the pro bono coordinator of the Singapore office, a founding member and executive director of The Global Pro Bono Bar Association, and a leader in the firmwide Anti-Human Trafficking Initiative, in which he has coordinated a number of multi-jurisdictional pro bono projects involving multiple K&L Gates offices and collaborating firms around the world.

Prior to joining the firm, Robert represented the United States in Singapore through the development of scholarship related to the use of international arbitral process to resolve disputes in public international law with the U.S. Department of State Fulbright Program. He served as a Captain in the 1-175 Infantry Battalion of the Maryland Army National Guard and earned the U.S. Army's Meritorious Service Medal for his work as the U.S. battalion communications officer deployed to the Egyptian Sinai with the Multinational Force & Observers peacekeeping mission in 2011-2012.

Robert holds the Juris Doctor degree from Georgetown Law in Washington, D.C. and the Master of Economic Law degree (*Master II, Global Governance Studies*) from Sciences Po Law School in Paris. He completed his internship service with international arbitration teams in the offices of two global law firms in Paris and Singapore, served as a summer law intern with the U.S. Department of Justice's Antitrust Division and Consumer Protection Branch, and completed a judicial internship with Judge Lynn Leibovitz of the District of Columbia Superior Court.

Robert and his wife live with their four children in Singapore.

## PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Prior to joining the firm, Robert was involved in the U.S. Department of State Fulbright Program, where he represented the United States in Singapore through research and the development of scholarship related to the use of international arbitral process to resolve disputes in public international law.

He completed his internship service in the offices of two global law firms in Paris and Singapore, where he provided legal research and writing support to the international arbitration teams. He served as a summer law intern with the U.S. Department of Justice's Antitrust Division and Consumer Protection Branch and also as a judicial intern with Judge Lynn Leibovitz of the District of Columbia Superior Court.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- Fulbright Grant Recipient, U.S Department of State Fulbright U.S. Student Program, 2014-2015.
- Recipient, Meritorious Service Medal, U.S. Army, 2011-2012.

## PROFESSIONAL / CIVIC ACTIVITIES

- Member, International Law Association (Singapore Branch), 2021-Present
- Member, Union Internationale Des Avocats (International Associate of Lawyers), 2021-Present.
- Member, INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION, 2021-Present.
- Member, American Society of International Law, 2021-Present.
- Member, International Associate of Legal Ethics, 2021-Present.
- Member, American Mensa, 2021-Present.
- Member, U.S. Chess Federation, 2021-Present.
- Member, Sciences PO Alumni, 2021-Present.
- Participant, International Law eAcademy, National University of Singapore - Centre for International Law, 2020.
- Attendee, AAA-ICC-ICSID 36th Joint Colloquium on International Arbitration, 2020.
- Participant, SIAC South Asia Academy 2020, Singapore International Arbitration Centre, 2020.
- Member, ICC Singapore Arbitration Group, 2019-Present.
- Executive Director, The Global Pro Bono Bar Association, 2018-Present.
- Advocate and Attendee, Singapore International Arbitration Academy, 2016.
- Arbitrator, Vis East International Arbitration Moot Competition, Hong Kong, 2015.
- Technical Editor, *Vindobona Journal*, Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot Alumni Association, 2015.

## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- Speaker, “Current Climate for Investments – Concerns for Investment Structuring & Disputes in Southeast Asia” webinar, 28 June 2022, K&L Gates Straits Law and Tilleke & Gibbins
- Speaker, “World Arbitration Update 2021,” Virtual Conference, (15 October 2021).
- Facilitator, “Pro Bono Student Empowerment in a Post-Pandemic World”, Inaugural Asia Pro Bono Virtual Conference (25 September 2020).
- Presenter, “Cross-Border Pro Bono”, 8th Asia Pro Bono Conference, Kathmandu, 2019.
- Presenter, “Advocates of Conscience: Reflections on International Legal Professionalism with The Global Pro Bono Bar Association”, presented at T.M.C. Asser Instituut (The Hague), Modern Slavery Law Clinic, Monash University (Kuala Lumpur), and Pepperdine Law Modern Slavery Practicum Course (Malibu via Remote Connection), 2019.
- Organizer, Presenter, and Moderator, “The Difference Pro Bono Can Make: A Look at Immigration Detention & International Legal Professionalism”, in association with UNHCR for the 7th Asia Pro Bono Conference, Hong Kong, 2018.
- Presenter, “Student Pro Bono: Different by design”, 7th Asia Pro Bono Conference, Hong Kong, 2018.
- Panel Organizer and Moderator, “The Role of Public Interest Engagement in Developing International Law: From Pro Bono Practice to Private Sector Involvement”, International Law Association 78th Biennial Conference, Sydney, 2018.
- Presenter, “Pro Bono and the Fight Against Human Trafficking”, 6th Asia Pro Bono Conference, Kuala Lumpur, 2017.
- Panelist, Discussion on Fighting Human Trafficking and Slavery, Thomson Reuters Livestream Event for the Trust Women Conference, UN Women, Singapore Committee, Singapore, 2016.
- Organizer and Moderator, “Pro Bono Engagement with Human Trafficking and Forced Labour in South East Asia”, K&L Gates LLP, Singapore, 2016.
- Seminar Instructor, “Getting to YES: Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in Energy Disputes in Southeast Asia” (with Glenn Cheng; accredited by the Singapore Institute of Legal Education for Continuing Professional Development training in Singapore), Singapore Management University, 2016.
- Presenter, “Investment Treaty Arbitration: At the Crossroads of Geopolitics & Legal Practice” (accredited in New York and California for continuing legal education training; available on the K&L Gates LLP Global Online Learning Center), K&L Gates LLP, Singapore, 2016.
- Symposium Organizer and Speaker, “Public Interest/Private Dispute: The Future of the Public-Private Divide in International Arbitration”, White & Case LLP, Paris, 2014.

## EDUCATION

- B.A., University of Maryland at College Park, 2014
- J.D., Georgetown University Law Center, 2014
- Maitrise en Droit, Sciences Po Law School, 2014 (*Global Governance Studies*)
- B.A., Georgetown University, 2006

## ADMISSIONS

- Bar of New York
- International Criminal Court (Assistant to Counsel)

## LANGUAGES

- English
- French

## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP POWERED BY HUB

- June 2023, Arbitration World
- 17 April 2023, The Decision of the International Court of Justice in Certain Iranian Assets
- 20 April 2022, Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Claims Against Russia in Investment Treaty Arbitration - Part II of II
- 19 April 2022, Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Sanctions Climate for Foreign Investment in Russia - Part I of II
- 21 January 2022, Pandemic-Related Investor-State Dispute Settlement - Part Three of a Three-Part Series
- 9 December 2021, Pandemic-Related Investor-State Dispute Settlement - Part Two of a Three-Part Series
- 2 December 2021, The Cost-Benefit Analysis of Pursuing Investor-State Arbitration in a Post-Pandemic World
- 2 December 2021, Pandemic-Related Investor-State Dispute Settlement - Part One of a Three-Part Series
- November 2021, Arbitration World
- 17 February 2021, Evaluating Foreign Investment in RCEP Member States from a Dispute Resolution Perspective
- 9 December 2020, Asia-Pacific Signals Strong Commitment to Economic Integration and Cooperation with RCEP Signing

- 6 September 2018, Stopping Traffick: Developing Corporate Best Practices for Ethical Supply Chains
- 5 July 2016, A New Sheriff In Town: The Monetary Authority of Singapore Creates New Anti-Money Laundering And Enforcement Departments
- 15 April 2016, The Global Spotlight on Transparency: Renewed Focus on Tax and Financial Regulatory Enforcement in Singapore
- January 2016, Arbitration World

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- Singapore, LEGAL 500: INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION COUNTRY COMPARATIVE GUIDE(5th ed. 2020).
- How To Prep For Investor-State Disputes Related To COVID-19, LAW360.COM (with Ian Meredith and Matthew Weldon) (8 June 2020).
- “Singapore”, Legal 500: International Arbitration Country Comparative Guide (4th ed. 2019).
- “The Year in Review”, ABA SECTION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, DISPUTES, INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION, VOL. NO. 51 ABA/SIL YIR (N.S.), page nos. 109-25 (2017) (contributing author to Section III on Singapore and Hong Kong topics).
- “The Positional Game: Anticipating Uncertainty in the Age of the Trans-Pacific Partnership”, GLOBAL GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS® 2016: MID-YEAR OUTLOOK, K&L GATES LLP, pp. 124-25 (with Andre Jumabhoy) (2016).
- “New Ports of Call: The Agreed Text of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Signals a New Landscape for Pacific Trade, Investment, and Dispute Resolution”, *Arbitration World* (31st ed.), K&L Gates LLP (January 2016; co-authored with Haig Oghigian and C.J. Hoppel).
- “Believing in Miracles”, 20 CARDOZO ELECTRONIC L. BULL. 1, Spring-Summer 2014.
- “Justice as Fairness' as a Guiding Principle in Arbitration”, COM. & BUS. LITIG. (A.B.A.), November 12, 2012.

## NEWS & EVENTS

- 17 May 2023, K&L Gates Receives TrustLaw Impact Award for Role in Pre-Trial Detention Survey
- 28 September 2022, World Arbitration Update 2022 –The Actions of Russia, Countermeasures and Resulting International Disputes, Including Investor-State and Commercial Arbitration
- 28 June 2022, K&L Gates Assists Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative in Coordinating Legal Framework Survey of Pre-Trial Detention Across 46 Commonwealth Jurisdictions
- 23 November 2021, Investor-State Disputes Arising from the Pandemic: Strategic Responses for Representatives of Investors and Host States, including Developing Countries, hosted by Union Internationale des Avocats / International Association of Lawyers

- 16 November 2021, International Investment Law & Investor-State Dispute Settlement 2021, hosted by Practising Law Institute
- 4 March 2021, K&L Gates Lawyers Assist The Gambia in Building Capacity in International Investment Law & Arbitration Through IDLO's Investment Support Programme for Least Developed Countries
- August 2020, K&L Gates Lawyers Provide Insights on Impact of COVID-19 Across Various Industries
- 23 February 2017, K&L Gates Advises Kacific Broadband Satellites on US\$147 Million Financing of New Satellite Order
- 24 January 2017, K&L Gates Advises Indonesia Mining SOE on US\$254 Million Turnkey EPC Contract

## MEDIA MENTIONS

- ISDS: "reform in the air," *GlobalArbitrationReview.com*, 29 November 2021

## AREAS OF FOCUS

- International Arbitration
- Appellate Litigation
- Commercial Disputes
- Investor-State Arbitration

## REPRESENTATIVE EXPERIENCE

### Investor-State arbitration work

- Represented a national government in three appeals before the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and in related District Court and ICSID proceedings.
- Provided capacity building to a sovereign African State with respect to investor-State arbitration and international investment law (including customary international law, treaty interpretation, State attribution and State responsibility) in collaboration with the International Development Law Organization's Investment Support Programme for LDCs.
- Advised a foreign investor in the border security sector in preparation for anticipated negotiations and/or investment treaty arbitration proceedings with an amount in dispute of over US\$32 million under the ICSID Rules arising from the alleged breach by a sovereign State in South Asia of public international law obligations with respect to indirect contractual expropriation, fair and equitable treatment, and other substantive treaty protections.
- Representation of a foreign investor in the transportation infrastructure and outdoor commercial advertising sectors in investment treaty arbitration proceedings with an amount in dispute of US\$365 million under the UNCITRAL Rules arising from the alleged breach by a sovereign State in the Middle East of public



international law obligations with respect to indirect contractual expropriation, fair and equitable treatment, international Human Rights, and other substantive protections under treaty and customary international law.

- Representation of an aviation construction joint venture company in contractual re-negotiations with a ministry of a South Asian State and prospective international arbitration with an amount in dispute of over US\$660 million with respect to legal rights and potential claims arising from alleged expropriation, both in investment treaty arbitration under the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules) and in international commercial arbitration under the SIAC Rules.
- Acting for an investor in the European renewable energy market in an investment treaty dispute under the auspices of the Energy Charter Treaty against an Eastern European sovereign State over alleged indirect expropriation.
- Acting for an investor in the European renewable energy market in an investment treaty arbitration brought under the auspices of a bilateral investment treaty and governed by the SCC Rules against an Eastern European sovereign State over alleged indirect expropriation.

### **International commercial arbitration work**

- Representation of a parent entity and operating company in the South Asian renewable energy sector in international commercial arbitration under the SIAC Rules with respect to a shareholder dispute with an amount in dispute of up to US\$20 million.
- Representation of rights holder in global hospitality design concept in connection with a dispute with Indonesian counterparty in international commercial arbitration under the SIAC Rules, including with respect to applications for consolidation and expedited procedure, in a matter arising from alleged breaches of intellectual property (IP) rights and unpaid sums under multiple management agreements concerning multiple venues.
- Representation of an Asian state-owned entity in the energy sector in SIAC arbitration with an amount in dispute in excess of US\$500 million, including drafting of pleadings and submissions, appearance at hearing of interlocutory application for the early dismissal of claims, and drafting of submissions for the challenge of an arbitrator.
- Advising of a subsea cable installation contractor in SIAC arbitration proceedings with an amount in dispute of US\$37 million arising from the alleged wrongful termination of a subcontract.
- Representation of a client in the aviation sector in a US\$10 million dispute over additional freight costs arising from delayed delivery, including the provision of advice in preparation for potential SIAC arbitration or mediated settlement under the Singapore Convention as well as direct representation in settlement negotiations with the opposing party.
- Acting for a client in relation to claims for damages arising from a takeover conspiracy in a complex dispute involving an international arbitration as well as other proceedings.
- Acting for a regional Asian airline company with respect to the preparation of a Notice of Arbitration and Emergency Application for Interim Relief in a dispute with a European counterparty.

- Advising an Asian state-owned entity with respect to the recognition and enforcement of a foreign arbitral award in Hong Kong.
- Acting for the exclusive agent of a global rubber trading company in relation to claims in a SIAC arbitration in excess of €10 million following the termination of an exclusive agency agreement.
- Representation of an LPG provider in Asia in a dispute with an Asian state-owned entity in the energy sector over the late delivery of cargo with anticipated SIAC arbitration and an amount in dispute of US\$2 million.

### **Other cross-border representation**

- Acting in an internal investigation involving the provision of advice to a major corporation in the Asian energy sector with respect to options for strategic global response to allegations of corporate wrongdoing and potential liability arising from “Operation Car Wash” in Brazil.
- Advising two marine and civil engineering consortia on ongoing project management, claims, variations and other contractual control issues in respect of USD multi-billion sovereign-sponsored EPC contract packages for dredging, land reclamation, foreshore defence, wharves, and ancillary structures in Asia.
- Representation of a ship owner in a multi-contract charterparty sale-and-purchase dispute with the charterer, including with respect to the issuance of letters of demand, coordination of options for vessel arrest in multiple jurisdictions, and the ultimate drafting of a favorable settlement agreement.
- Acting for a client in the Asian energy sector in a complex international dispute arising from a joint operating agreement with multiple commercial, technical, regulatory and legal issues and over US\$100 million in dispute including decommissioning and abandonment costs as well as interest on the principal claim.
- Acting for a listed global company in the energy sector in connection with a due diligence exercise to facilitate a potential business relationship in the Indian market.
- Advising of a client and the development of a draft response to preserve the client's rights with respect to a counterparty's breach of a master services agreement in a pharmaceutical supply relationship.
- Acting for major client in the Asian energy sector in the review of documents associated with the evaluation of potential claims in arbitration and the development of a customized NDA for use in outreach to third-party consultants.
- Acting for a listed global company in the information technology sector in connection with a periodic risk assessment exercise for sales operations in markets across Asia.
- Advising Chinese multinational listed company in developing EPC and assignment contractual risk profiles for a USD multi-million South American public works project.
- Coordinating the obtainment of local legal advice from multiple jurisdictions in Southeast Asia on behalf of Asia-based and U.S.-based clients regarding issues with supply chain management or product distribution, including in regard to implications arising from international sanctions involving Iran.



- Acting for a large private equity fund in relation to the conduct of due diligence for a prospective share purchase agreement in contemplation of a multi-million USD international M&A transaction in the cosmetics industry.
- Acting for a member of the U.S. military and foreign spouse in a U.S. immigration matter.

### **Pro bono representation**

- Acting pro bono in a U.S. immigration matter for an unaccompanied child plaintiff petitioner seeking relief under the Convention Against Torture and withholding of removal as a result of persecution by authorities of a West African sovereign State.
- Acting pro bono to coordinate a cross-platform research team drawn from six (6) K&L Gates LLP offices in Australia, North America, Europe, and Asia to compile a comparative law memorandum demonstrating the societal impact of pro bono legal services in support of a Hong Kong-based NGO's application for charitable status in Hong Kong.
- Acting pro bono to coordinate legal research and writing to meet an ethical supply chain NGO client's request for multi-jurisdictional research involving the law of Canada, the Netherlands, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the European Union, working with local counsel or the office of an international law firm in each jurisdiction.
- Coordinating pro bono support among three (3) K&L Gates LLP offices, an external local law firm, and a corporate in-house counsel department to obtain international pro bono corporate structuring advice across three (3) jurisdictions in Asia for an international anti-slavery NGO.
- Coordinating the pro bono efforts of attorneys in ten (10) K&L Gates offices and three (3) collaborating firms to facilitate completion of a multi-jurisdictional legal research project examining regulations related to human trafficking or forced labour and applicable to corporate supply chains in nine (9) jurisdictions across four (4) continents.
- Advising pro bono an international anti-slavery organization in the collaborative development of a proposed ADR regime to resolve disputes between workers and private sector employers in a Southeast Asian jurisdiction in conjunction with multiple international law firms.
- Acting pro bono for an international anti-slavery NGO in the review of possible civil claims in U.S. litigation in collaboration with a local anti-slavery NGO in Southeast Asia on behalf of four (4) child victims of sex trafficking against alleged U.S. perpetrators.