

PRESS RELEASE

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NUS Law Students Continue Winning Streak

The National University of Singapore continued its unparalleled record in international moot court competitions in 2001 by emerging as champions in the 10th Manfred Lachs Space Law Moot Court Competition. The international finals of the Competition were held in Toulouse, France from 1 to 5 October 2001.

The Manfred Lachs Space Law Moot Court Competition has been organised annually since 1992 by the International Institute of Space Law (IISL) of the International Astronautical Federation. The Competition is named after the late Manfred Lachs, a former judge of the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Judge Lachs, who was from Poland, had a special interest in the law of outer space.

The problem in the 2001 Competition, "The Case Concerning Access to ESI-1 Data", raised legal issues relating to remote sensing of the earth's resources from outer space. Representing the applicant state in the Final Round, the Singapore team, comprising final-year law students, Celina Chua Mei Yen and Gerardine Goh Meishan, argued that a developing country whose territory is sensed has a right of non-discriminatory access at reasonable cost terms to data about its territory. It argued that the sensing state must ensure this right, even when commercial private companies are licensed to carry out the remote sensing activities and sell the data.

Regional competitions are held in the spring in the United States, Europe and the Asia-Pacific. The winners of the regional competitions meet in the semi final and final rounds, which are held in October in conjunction with the annual IISL Space Law Colloquium.

In the semi-final round in Toulouse, the US Regional champion, the University of North Carolina, faced the European Regional Champion, the University of Dijon, France. The University of North Carolina won, and advanced to the Final Round to face the NUS, the Regional Champion from the Asia-Pacific. NUS had advanced directly to the Final Round because its Memorials (written arguments) were ranked first among the three Regional Champions.

The Space Law Moot Court Competition is the only international moot court competition in which three judges from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague serve as judges in the Final Round. The ICJ judges in Toulouse were H.E. President Gilbert Guillaume of France, H.E. Judge Vladlen S. Vereshchetin of the Russia Federation, and H.E. Judge Abdul G. Koroma of Sierra Leone. Judge Guillaume is an expert on air law, and is currently the President of the Court. Judge Vereshchetin is a recognized international expert on the law of outer space, and was a member of the USSR delegations to the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Legal Subcommittee from 1979 to 1990. Judge Koroma served as a delegate of Sierra Leone to the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

The NUS team was accompanied to Toulouse by their coach, Associate Professor Robert Beckman. The Japan Space Agency (NASDA) sponsored the team's participation in the Final Round in Toulouse by providing airfare and accommodation.

This is only the second year which the competition has included a team from the Asia-Pacific region. NUS was the Asia-Pacific Regional Champion in both 2000 and 2001. In the 2000 Competition in Rio de Janeiro, NUS lost in the semi-final round to the US Regional Champion.

The Lachs Space Law Moot Court Competition has sparked an interest in the law of outer space among students at the Faculty of Law of the National University of Singapore. As a result, the Faculty introduced a course in Space Law & Policy this year. The course is taught by Professor Beckman and by Adjunct Senior Fellow, Ms. Tanja Masson, who is concurrently Secretary of the International Institute of Space Law.

This is the fifth international moot competition that NUS students have won in 2001. NUS students were also champions in the prestigious Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition in Washington D.C. in March (for the fourth time); the International Maritime Law Arbitration Moot Competition in Hong Kong in July (for the second year in a row); Regional Round of the Manfred Lachs International Space Law Moot Competition in Singapore in October; and the Asia Cup Moot Court Competition in Tokyo in August.

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