



So who is Simon Cook and what is his connection with ITFA?

Whilst it is not the case in reality, it certainly doesn't feel that long ago when I started out as a junior lawyer and received my first taste of trade finance. It was a very different market back in the late 1990's and, in fact, ITFA was IFA and the forfaiting and factoring markets were quite distinct from the structured trade and commodity finance market I was mostly involved with.

I first became aware of IFA in the early 2000's and have been closely involved with the association ever since in one capacity or another. As well as attending most, and presenting at a number, of the annual conference and AGM events and various regional committee events over the years, my connection with IFA and then ITFA has also covered a number of more specific aspects. These range from carrying out legal work on the IFA Primary Market Guide and Secondary Market Guidelines through to mentoring young professionals over a number of years with a view to attracting them to the market.

Whilst my early years as a lawyer involved transactions in Latin America, Europe and the CIS, the market changed and during the 2000's the work revolved more around the Middle East, the Far East and Africa culminating in my move to Dubai where I spent four years between 2008 -2012. More recently, in the 8 years or so since I joined Sullivan, my full time job has focused mostly on EMEA and it was mainly the result of my significant amount of work in Africa that I became a founding member of ITFA's Africa Regional Committee.

ITFA has developed enormously as an industry body over the last 10-15 years driving the trade finance market (in its widest sense) forward and acting as a focal point for its members on the significant issues of the day. At the same time, it has increased membership tremendously both in terms of numbers and geographical reach but still managed to retain its tight-knit community feel. As noted above, I was a founding member of ITFA's Africa Regional Committee when it was established in November 2017 and I remain a committed member today. It has been a rewarding if sometimes challenging role but showed me what could be achieved. It was really seeing where ITFA was going and my involvement at regional committee level which meant I was very happy to be given the chance in September 2021 to stand for election to ITFA's Executive Board and, following my election, I now look forward to the task at hand.

Education, education, education

While I expect to play my part, along with the other board members, to ensure ITFA remains at the forefront of the market and continues to take a lead for the industry generally, my specific remit is on the educational side. In my view, this is an increasingly important part of ITFA's role as its membership grows around the world and the issues affecting the market become more complex and more global. I believe my background as a lawyer covering at various times the full spectrum of trade finance products in many differing geographies can bring useful experience to the role.

As Head of Education, there are a number of things I would like to achieve. Whilst maintaining the right quality standards across the various ITFA geographical regions is a fairly obvious one, another is that I would like to bring the different regional committees closer together in terms of the educational offering. Naturally there will be certain issues and topics which are of more relevance to some geographies than others but there are also a number which will be of equal importance across the board. In this regard, I look forward to working more closely with the regional committees and establishing a working group representing each region to achieve the consistency of approach and wider dissemination of knowledge that would benefit all of ITFA's members wherever they are located. If information is relevant to members generally then I believe we should do what we can to make it available across the membership. This is already being done through the various Market Practice



Committee papers and other articles and reports and I would like the various educational events which ITFA puts on to follow a similar approach where appropriate.

The events which each region puts on are also likely to benefit from good media coverage and I will be working with the board on this front in order to try to raise ITFA's profile further particularly in those places where it is perhaps less well known and hopefully further increase membership. Allied to this, I will also be looking to link with other event/conference companies in the trade finance market to widen ITFA's educational net so as to provide the educational benefits of membership to as large a group as possible.

Whilst some of the objectives will take some time, I look forward to working with the board and the regions on them over the coming years of my term.