

## FOREWORD

In The Hague, not far from The Hague Conference on Private International Law and the Peace Palace, runs a leafy street named after Tobias Asser. Also prominent is the square between these institutions which has been named after Andrew Carnegie who was the benefactor in building the Peace Palace. While the Carnegieplein connects The Hague Conference with the Peace Palace, the Tobias Asserlaan leads from the Peace Palace to the TMC Asser Instituut. Similarly, the man Asser is the ultimate link between private international law and public international law.

Tobias Michael Carel Asser (1838-1913) was a man with a vision, with a passionate devotion for the field of law, with a remarkable level of energy and drafting skills but also a man who was always pragmatic, never lost in idealism. His reputation was worldwide and beyond reproach. He had no enemies to speak of.

He was the man behind the *Institut de droit international* in 1873, the first Hague conventions in the field of private international law, as well as The Hague Peace Conferences (1899, 1907) and the establishment of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (1899). One of the first conferences of the International Law Association (ILA, also established in 1873) took place in The Hague in 1875 where Asser was again an active player.

When the Netherlands branch of the ILA was set up in 1910, Asser was immediately elected honorary chair (the first board consisted of as many as 33 members). He was already 72 at the time and quietly withdrawing from active life. A year later he was awarded, jointly with Alfred Fried, the Nobel Peace Prize.

One hundred years later we are now celebrating the happy beginnings of the Netherlands Society of International Law/Netherlands branch of the ILA (NVIR) in 1910 and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to one of its eminent founding fathers. It was a logical step for the NVIR to mark its Centenary by offering to organize the biennial ILA Conference in The Hague in August 2010.<sup>1</sup> The conference was a great success, with more than 750 participants from all over the world, and with a sound and impressive Volume of Proceedings as a tangible result which was published well within one year of ILA 2010.

The festivities around NVIR's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary were extended to include the fact that Asser was a joint recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1911. A special 'Asser 100' seminar has been organized based on his activities for IDI, ILA and NVIR as well as The Hague Conference and The Hague Peace Conferences. The aim is both to reflect on the past and to look ahead to the needs and opportunities for advancing the rule of law in international affairs and strengthening multilateral diplomacy.

The topping of the cake of anniversary activities comes in the form of a royal warrant from Her Majesty the Queen allowing the NVIR to use the prefix 'Royal'. From 2011 on, the NVIR will be called the Royal Netherlands Society of International Law (Koninklijke Nederlandse Vereniging voor Internationaal Recht, KNVIR) – something to be proud of and thankful for.

We owe Tobias Asser a fitting tribute, and we are hence proud to present this book that has been researched and written by the ultimate international law historian, Arthur Eyffinger. Dr

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<sup>1</sup> See also the special issue of the *Netherlands International Law Review*, 'The Netherlands Society of International Law. One Hundred Years 1910-2010', vol. 57 (2010), issue 2.

Eyffinger once again displays his in-depth knowledge, wit and vision in a transparent and accessible manner. He shows us that in this world we need Assers, but that they do not appear spontaneously and that, like Asser, they must combine work with passion, vision and discipline.

The KNVIR would like to express its gratitude to TMC Asser Press for its skillful and expeditious services in producing this beautiful book.

This preface is one of my last contributions as chair of the KNVIR, as my term as a board member has come to an end. Together with my fellow board members, and great team players, Professor Katharina Boele-Woelki, Professor Marcel Brus (Honorary Secretary) and Dr Peter van Krieken (Honorary Treasurer), I sincerely hope that our Centenary celebrations and ILA 2010 have given the Netherlands Society a positive boost in the best Asser spirit. With this book by Arthur Eyffinger we trust to add to that momentum.

Leiden, September 2011

Nico Schrijver

*Chair KNVIR and President of the ILA*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nico Schrijver', with a horizontal line underneath it.