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## Diversity the focus as PAW 2023 begins

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The first day of the 7th Edition of the Paris Arbitration Week kicked off on Monday 28th, with opening keynote from Yas Banifatemi, which focused on the theme of diversity in arbitration.

Posté le mardi, mars 28 2023



Yesterday was the first day of Paris Arbitration Week, kicked off by Yas Banifatemi whose opening keynote focused on the theme of diversity in arbitration. The day's program concluded with a very well attended drinks reception at the Palais d'Iéna.

The full PAW board of nine (including seven women) were on hand to open Paris Arbitration Week before giving the floor to Yas Banifatemi, the keynote speaker, who delivered a



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powerful address on diversity in arbitration, a topic she has championed throughout her illustrious career.

Asking first if diversity is the journey or the destination, she delivered a compelling argument for why it is, in fact, both, backed by sound data. She stressed that, nowadays, we're still facing a diversity deficit, although the landscape has improved for minorities.

Referring to a host of surveys and statistics, she pointed out that many different biases are still entwined in today's arbitration world, such as a jobs-for-the-boys culture where men are appointed by men of a similar racial and socio-economic background, men "who are projecting an image of gravitas which creates an echo chamber" or the geographic bias in appointments which benefits the Western arbitrator. She also called upon the gathered arbitration community to view all arbitration stakeholders through the lens of diversity, including the exclusive ranks of arbitration experts, where the number of women is still low.

She also commented that diversity is not only a social justice matter of persons but also refers to the diversity of applicable laws and arbitration seats, which are still

overwhelmingly UK, France or Switzerland based.

In conclusion she described diversity as a moving target that has to evolve in a dynamic way and insisted that diversity is a proxy for equality: equal access to be at the table, equal consideration and equal visibility.

Monday evening saw more than 1,200 attend PAW board's drinks mixer at the home of the French economic social and environment council (CESE) in the palais d'Iéna.

A satisfyingly packed first day completed, Paris Arbitration Week is well and truly underway.



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