The Singapore International Mediation Centre

Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland and Germany),
Solicitor (England & Wales and Hong Kong)
Of Counsel, KGP Legal LLC
alexander.ressos@kgplegal.com.sg
www.ressos.com.sg

Origins

Mediation in Singapore did not begin with international business. The Singapore Mediation Centre was launched on 16 August 1997 with the support of the judiciary, the Singapore Academy of Law and the Ministry of Law. It handles a wide range of disputes, from construction claims, which make up about 40 per cent of its cases, to banking, employment and family matters.[1] Courts and community mediation centres added a culture of settlement that draws on Asian traditions of conciliation as well as on the case-management practice of English civil procedure. The step into international commercial mediation came in 2013. In April of that year the Chief Justice and the Ministry of Law set up a working group, co-chaired by Edwin Glasgow QC and George Lim SC, to develop Singapore into a centre for international mediation.[2]

The Singapore International Mediation Centre (SIMC) was founded on 5 November 2014 on the recommendation of that working group. It is an independent, not-for-profit institution that focuses on cross-border commercial disputes and offers fixed and reduced filing fees.[3] A sister body, the Singapore

© 2026 Dr Alexander Ressos. General information only, not legal, tax or investment advice. No client relationship is created. All Singapore law advice is provided by a duly licensed and regulated firm of Singapore advocates and solicitors only on the basis of an express written letter of engagement. More information at SingaporeIQ.com and ressos.com.sg.

International Mediation Institute, accredits mediators and sets professional standards. The SIMC sits in Maxwell Chambers, the same building that houses the hearing rooms of the arbitration institutions.

Panel and caseload

The SIMC panel numbered about 70 international mediators in early 2023, drawn from both common law and civil law traditions. The centre has released figures on the value of the disputes referred to it, although it publishes no annual statistics in the form that arbitral institutions use. In 2021 the total value of cases filed for mediation equalled the USD 3 billion of the previous six years combined. In 2022 it rose to USD 4.84 billion. Most SIMC mediations take a single day. The centre reports a settlement rate of 70 to 80 per cent.[4]

These figures should be read with care. The value of a dispute says little about the number of cases. A settlement rate reported by an institution also depends on which cases it counts. They show nevertheless that mediation has moved from small domestic claims into the range of disputes that would otherwise go to arbitration. Banks, trading houses and family groups increasingly use it before or during formal proceedings, often because a negotiated outcome preserves a relationship that a judgment would end.

Arb-Med-Arb

The best-known product of the SIMC is the Arb-Med-Arb Protocol with SIAC. A party starts an arbitration at SIAC, the proceedings are stayed and the dispute goes to mediation at SIMC. SIAC appoints the arbitrators and SIMC the mediator, each under its own rules, with the two functions normally exercised by different people. If the parties settle, the tribunal records the settlement as a consent award. If the mediation fails, the arbitration resumes.[5]

The protocol answers the main weakness of mediation in cross-border cases. Until the Singapore Convention, a mediated settlement was only a contract, which the creditor had to sue upon if the debtor did not perform. A consent award, by

© 2026 Dr Alexander Ressos. General information only, not legal, tax or investment advice. No client relationship is created. All Singapore law advice is provided by a duly licensed and regulated firm of Singapore advocates and solicitors only on the basis of an express written letter of engagement. More information at SingaporeIQ.com and ressos.com.sg.

contrast, is an arbitral award that can be enforced under the New York Convention in its 172 contracting states, subject to their local requirements.[6] Arb-Med-Arb thus combined the flexibility of mediation with the enforceability of arbitration. SIMC offers similar combinations under a Med-Arb protocol and under a joint protocol with the Japan International Mediation Center.

Litigation-Mediation-Litigation

The same idea was later applied to the court. The Litigation-Mediation-Litigation Protocol of the SICC and the SIMC came into effect on 12 January 2023. Parties may adopt it by a model clause in their contract or by a separate agreement after a dispute has arisen.[7] Once the SIMC notifies the court that the mediation has begun, the SICC may stay its proceedings for up to eight weeks, a period that it may extend for good reasons. The court remains able to grant interim relief during the stay, including freezing orders against the dissipation of assets.

If the parties settle, they may record the terms as an order of court at a case management conference. If they settle only part of the dispute, the remainder continues in the SICC. A settlement recorded in this way becomes a judgment of the Supreme Court, which can travel through the enforcement mechanisms described in the last section of this chapter.

Mediation as an export

The SIMC has turned mediation training into a form of legal diplomacy. In 2026 it held workshops for specialist mediators in Tokyo and, for the first time, in Central Asia and concluded a training programme in Armenia with support from the Asian Development Bank.[8] On 26 May 2026 it hosted a mock mediation and roundtable in Shanghai with the commercial mediation centre of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade. After the Minister for Law, Edwin Tong SC, had opened the event, the discussion turned to the implementation of China's newly enacted Commercial Mediation Law.[9] The link with China matters for Singapore. Chinese parties are among the largest users of Singapore's dispute resolution services, a subject that Chapter I.II examines.

© 2026 Dr Alexander Ressos. General information only, not legal, tax or investment advice. No client relationship is created. All Singapore law advice is provided by a duly licensed and regulated firm of Singapore advocates and solicitors only on the basis of an express written letter of engagement. More information at SingaporeIQ.com and ressos.com.sg.

Notes

1. Singapore Mediation Centre, "About us", mediation.com.sg (accessed November 2026): launched on 16 August 1997 by Chief Justice Yong Pung How; supported by the judiciary, the Singapore Academy of Law, the Ministry of Law and professional and trade associations; construction disputes about 40 per cent of cases; other matters include banking, employment, insurance, shipping and family disputes. ↩
2. Wikipedia, "Singapore International Mediation Centre" (accessed November 2026): working group set up in April 2013 by the Chief Justice and the Ministry of Law, co-chaired by Edwin Glasgow CBE QC and George Lim SC; panel of about 70 international mediators from 14 jurisdictions; Singapore International Mediation Institute as professional standards body. ↩
3. SIMC, "About SIMC", simc.com.sg (accessed November 2026): founded on 5 November 2014 following the recommendations of a working group convened by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and the Ministry of Law; independent, not-for-profit; focus on cross-border commercial disputes; fixed and reduced filing fees; office at Maxwell Chambers. ↩
4. SICC and SIMC, joint media release of 12 January 2023, paras 7 and 9: most mediations at SIMC take one day and have a 70–80 per cent settlement rate; total value of cases filed in 2021 equalled the USD 3 billion of 2014–2020; USD 4.84 billion in 2022; "About SIMC": panel of 70 international independent mediators. ↩
5. SIMC, "Arb-Med-Arb", simc.com.sg (accessed November 2026): referral to mediation before or during arbitration; separate appointment of arbitrators by SIAC and mediators by SIMC; settlement recorded as a consent award; arbitration continues if mediation fails; consent award "generally enforceable in 160 countries under the New York Convention". SIMC home page (simc.com.sg): protocols listed as Arb-Med-Arb, Lit-Med-Lit, Med-Arb and JIMC-SIMC Protocol. ↩

© 2026 Dr Alexander Ressos. General information only, not legal, tax or investment advice. No client relationship is created. All Singapore law advice is provided by a duly licensed and regulated firm of Singapore advocates and solicitors only on the basis of an express written letter of engagement. More information at SingaporeIQ.com and ressos.com.sg.

6. UNCITRAL, “Status: Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards (New York, 1958)”, uncitral.un.org (accessed November 2026): 172 parties. ↩
7. SICC and SIMC, joint media release of 12 January 2023, paras 1–2 and Annex B (LML Protocol): protocol in effect from 12 January 2023; adoption by model LML clause or separate agreement; referral of disputes commenced in the SICC to SIMC mediation; case management stay of up to eight weeks after the mediation commencement date, extendable for good reasons; interim relief despite the stay; settlement terms may be recorded as an order of court at a case management conference. ↩
8. SIMC news listing (simc.com.sg/news, accessed November 2026): items of 23 March 2026 (Specialist Mediators’ Workshop in Tokyo), 17 April 2026 (first Specialist Mediators’ Workshop in Central Asia) and 17 July 2026 (training programme in Armenia with support from the Asian Development Bank). ↩
9. SIMC, “A new chapter in mediation: Singapore and Shanghai deepen cross-border commercial mediation cooperation”, simc.com.sg, 5 June 2026: event of 26 May 2026 with the Shanghai CCPIT Commercial Mediation Centre; opening address by Minister for Law Edwin Tong SC; more than 100 participants; roundtable on the implementation of China’s newly enacted Commercial Mediation Law. ↩

Disclaimer

This article is provided for general information only. It is based on publicly available sources as at its date of publication. These sources have not been independently verified against licences, regulatory registers or the records of the entities concerned. It is not legal, tax, financial or investment advice. Nor is it a recommendation to invest in, transact with or use the services of any entity mentioned. Law and regulation change frequently, so the content may be incomplete or outdated. To the fullest extent permitted by law, Dr Alexander Ressos and the publisher of SingaporeIQ exclude all liability for loss or damage arising from the use of or reliance on this article. Readers should obtain advice on their specific circumstances before acting or refraining from action.

© 2026 Dr Alexander Ressos. General information only, not legal, tax or investment advice. No client relationship is created. All Singapore law advice is provided by a duly licensed and regulated firm of Singapore advocates and solicitors only on the basis of an express written letter of engagement. More information at SingaporeIQ.com and ressos.com.sg.

Names and trademarks of the entities discussed belong to their owners and are used for identification only. Their mention implies no endorsement, affiliation or allegation of wrongdoing. All Singapore law advice is provided by a duly licensed and regulated firm of Singapore advocates and solicitors only on the basis of an express written letter of engagement. Corrections and updates: contact@ressos.com.

© 2026 Dr Alexander Ressos. This article may be quoted with attribution to SingaporeIQ (SingaporeIQ.com). Reproduction in full and any commercial use require prior written consent. The Legal Terms at https://singaporeiq.com/legal-terms apply.

Author contact: Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP · contact@ressos.com

© 2026 Dr Alexander Ressos. General information only, not legal, tax or investment advice. No client relationship is created. All Singapore law advice is provided by a duly licensed and regulated firm of Singapore advocates and solicitors only on the basis of an express written letter of engagement. More information at SingaporeIQ.com and ressos.com.sg.