



In The Supreme Court of Bermuda
Commercial Court

PRACTICE DIRECTION

ISSUED BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE AND THE COMMERCIAL JUDGES

Ref. A/50

CIRCULAR NO. 17 OF 2007

**GUIDELINES APPLICABLE TO COURT-TO-COURT COMMUNICATIONS IN
CROSS-BORDER CASES**

Introduction

One of the most essential elements of cooperation in cross-border cases is communication among the administering authorities of the countries involved. Because of the importance of the courts in insolvency and reorganization proceedings, it is even more essential that the supervising courts be able to coordinate their activities to ensure the maximum available benefit for the stakeholders of financially troubled enterprises.

These Guidelines were originally adopted and promulgated in ‘Transnational Insolvency: Principles of Cooperation Among the NAFTA Countries’ by the American Law Institute on May 16, 2000, and adopted by the International Insolvency Institute on June 10, 2001. The Guidelines have since been adopted by British Commonwealth courts, such as the British Columbia Supreme Court and the Ontario Commercial List. Extensive indirect communication between the Supreme Court of Bermuda and courts in, inter alia, the United States and Canada in cross-border insolvency cases has taken place on an ad hoc basis for many years.

The Commercial Court of Bermuda now adopts the Guidelines for application in relation to cross-border insolvency proceedings involving any other jurisdiction where the foreign court has either adopted the Guidelines, or substantially similar procedural rules, or where the foreign court has agreed to apply the Guidelines to the case in question.

These Guidelines are intended to enhance coordination and harmonization of insolvency proceedings that involve more than one country through communications among the jurisdictions involved. Communications by judges directly with judges or administrators

in a foreign country, however, raise issues of credibility and proper procedures. The context alone is likely to create concern in litigants unless the process is transparent and clearly fair. Thus, communication among courts in cross-border cases is both more important and more sensitive than in domestic cases.

These Guidelines encourage such communications while channeling them through transparent procedures. The Guidelines are meant to permit rapid cooperation in a developing insolvency case while ensuring due process to all concerned.

The Guidelines are not meant to be static, but are meant to be adapted and modified to fit the circumstances of individual cases and to change and evolve as the international insolvency community gains experience from working with them. They are to apply only in a manner that is consistent with local procedures and local ethical requirements. They do not address the details of notice and procedure that depend upon the law and practice in each jurisdiction.

However, the Guidelines represent approaches that are likely to be highly useful in achieving efficient and just resolutions of cross-border insolvency issues. Their use, with such modifications and under such circumstances as may be appropriate in a particular case, is therefore recommended.

Guideline 1

Except in circumstances of urgency, prior to a communication with another Court, the Court should be satisfied that such a communication is consistent with all applicable Rules of Procedure in its country. Where a Court intends to apply these Guidelines (in whole or in part and with or without modifications), the Guidelines to be employed should, wherever possible, be formally adopted before they are applied.

Coordination of Guidelines between Courts is desirable and officials of both Courts may communicate in accordance with Guideline 8(d) with regard to the application and implementation of the Guidelines.

Guideline 2

A Court may communicate with another Court in connection with matters relating to proceedings before it for the purposes of coordinating and harmonizing proceedings before it with those in the other jurisdiction.

Guideline 3

A Court may communicate with an Insolvency Administrator in another jurisdiction or an authorized Representative of the Court in that jurisdiction in connection with the coordination and harmonization of the proceedings before it with the proceedings in the other jurisdiction.

Guideline 4

A Court may permit a duly authorized Insolvency Administrator to communicate with a foreign Court directly, subject to the approval of the foreign Court, or through an Insolvency Administrator in the other jurisdiction or through an authorized Representative of the foreign Court on such terms as the Court considers appropriate.

Guideline 5

A Court may receive communications from a foreign Court or from an authorized Representative of the foreign Court or from a foreign Insolvency Administrator and should respond directly if the communication is from a foreign Court (subject to Guideline 7 in the case of two-way communications) and may respond directly or through an authorized Representative of the Court or through a duly authorized Insolvency Administrator if the communication is from a foreign Insolvency Administrator, subject to local rules concerning ex parte communications.

Guideline 6

Communications from a Court to another Court may take place by or through the Court:

- (a) Sending or transmitting copies of formal orders, judgments, opinions, reasons for decision, endorsements, transcripts of proceedings, or other documents directly to the other Court and providing advance notice to counsel for affected parties in such manner as the Court considers appropriate;
- (b) Directing counsel or a foreign or domestic Insolvency Administrator to transmit or deliver copies of documents, pleadings, affidavits, factums, briefs, or other documents that are filed or to be filed with the Court to the other Court in such fashion as may be appropriate and providing advance notice to counsel for affected parties in such manner as the Court considers appropriate;
- (c) Participating in two-way communications with the other Court by telephone or video conference call or other electronic means, in which case Guideline 7 should apply.

Guideline 7

In the event of communications between the Courts in accordance with Guidelines 2 and 5 by means of telephone or video conference call or other electronic means, unless otherwise directed by either of the two Courts:

- (a) Counsel for all affected parties should be entitled to participate in person during the communication and advance notice of the communication should be

given to all parties in accordance with the Rules of Procedure applicable in each Court;

(b) The communication between the Courts should be recorded and may be transcribed. A written transcript may be prepared from a recording of the communication which, with the approval of both Courts, should be treated as an official transcript of the communication;

(c) Copies of any recording of the communication, of any transcript of the communication prepared pursuant to any Direction of either Court, and of any official transcript prepared from a recording should be filed as part of the record in the proceedings and made available to counsel for all parties in both Courts subject to such Directions as to confidentiality as the Courts may consider appropriate; and

(d) The time and place for communications between the Courts should be to the satisfaction of both Courts. Personnel other than Judges in each Court may communicate fully with each other to establish appropriate arrangements for the communication without the necessity for participation by counsel unless otherwise ordered by either of the Courts.

Guideline 8

In the event of communications between the Court and an authorized Representative of the foreign Court or a foreign Insolvency Administrator in accordance with Guidelines 3 and 5 by means of telephone or video conference call or other electronic means, unless otherwise directed by the Court:

(a) Counsel for all affected parties should be entitled to participate in person during the communication and advance notice of the communication should be given to all parties in accordance with the Rules of Procedure applicable in each Court;

(b) The communication should be recorded and may be transcribed. A written transcript may be prepared from a recording of the communication which, with the approval of the Court, can be treated as an official transcript of the communication;

(c) Copies of any recording of the communication, of any transcript of the communication prepared pursuant to any Direction of the Court, and of any official transcript prepared from a recording should be filed as part of the record in the proceedings and made available to the other Court and to counsel for all parties in both Courts subject to such Directions as to confidentiality as the Court may consider appropriate; and

(d) The time and place for the communication should be to the satisfaction of the Court. Personnel of the Court other than Judges may communicate fully with the authorized Representative of the foreign Court or the foreign Insolvency Administrator to establish appropriate arrangements for the communication without the necessity for participation by counsel unless otherwise ordered by the Court.

Guideline 9

A Court may conduct a joint hearing with another Court. In connection with any such joint hearing, the following should apply, unless otherwise ordered or unless otherwise provided in any previously approved Protocol applicable to such joint hearing:

(a) Each Court should be able to simultaneously hear the proceedings in the other Court.

(b) Evidentiary or written materials filed or to be filed in one Court should, in accordance with the Directions of that Court, be transmitted to the other Court or made available electronically in a publicly accessible system in advance of the hearing. Transmittal of such material to the other Court or its public availability in an electronic system should not subject the party filing the material in one Court to the jurisdiction of the other Court.

(c) Submissions or applications by the representative of any party should be made only to the Court in which the representative making the submissions is appearing unless the representative is specifically given permission by the other Court to make submissions to it.

(d) Subject to Guideline 7(b), the Court should be entitled to communicate with the other Court in advance of a joint hearing, with or without counsel being present, to establish Guidelines for the orderly making of submissions and rendering of decisions by the Courts, and to coordinate and resolve any procedural, administrative, or preliminary matters relating to the joint hearing.

(e) Subject to Guideline 7(b), the Court, subsequent to the joint hearing, should be entitled to communicate with the other Court, with or without counsel present, for the purpose of determining whether coordinated orders could be made by both Courts and to coordinate and resolve any procedural or non-substantive matters relating to the joint hearing.

Guideline 10

The Court should, except upon proper objection on valid grounds and then only to the extent of such objection, recognize and accept as authentic the provisions of statutes, statutory or administrative regulations, and rules of court of general application applicable to the proceedings in the other jurisdiction without the need for further proof or exemplification thereof.

Guideline 11

The Court should, except upon proper objection on valid grounds and then only to the extent of such objection, accept that Orders made in the proceedings in the other jurisdiction were duly and properly made or entered on or about their respective dates and accept that such Orders require no further proof or exemplification for purposes of the proceedings before it, subject to all such proper reservations as in the opinion of the Court are appropriate regarding proceedings by way of appeal or review that are actually pending in respect of any such Orders.

Guideline 12

The Court may coordinate proceedings before it with proceedings in another jurisdiction by establishing a Service List that may include parties that are entitled to receive notice of proceedings before the Court in the other jurisdiction (“Non-Resident Parties”). All notices, applications, motions, and other materials served for purposes of the proceedings before the Court may be ordered to also be provided to or served on the Non-Resident Parties by making such materials available electronically in a publicly accessible system or by facsimile transmission, certified or registered mail or delivery by courier, or in such other manner as may be directed by the Court in accordance with the procedures applicable in the Court.

Guideline 13

The Court may issue an Order or issue Directions permitting the foreign Insolvency Administrator or a representative of creditors in the proceedings in the other jurisdiction or an authorized Representative of the Court in the other jurisdiction to appear and be heard by the Court without thereby becoming subject to the jurisdiction of the Court.

Guideline 14

The Court may direct that any stay of proceedings affecting the parties before it shall, subject to further order of the Court, not apply to applications or motions brought by such parties before the other Court or that relief be granted to permit such parties to bring such applications or motions before the other Court on such terms and conditions as it considers appropriate. Court-to-Court communications in accordance with Guidelines 6 and 7 hereof may take place if an application or motion brought before the Court affects or might affect issues or proceedings in the Court in the other jurisdiction.

Guideline 15

A Court may communicate with a Court in another jurisdiction or with an authorized Representative of such Court in the manner prescribed by these Guidelines for purposes of coordinating and harmonizing proceedings before it with proceedings in the other jurisdiction regardless of the form of the proceedings before it or before the other

Court wherever there is commonality among the issues and/or the parties in the proceedings. The Court should, absent compelling reasons to the contrary, so communicate with the Court in the other jurisdiction where the interests of justice so require.

Guideline 16

Directions issued by the Court under these Guidelines are subject to such amendments, modifications, and extensions as may be considered appropriate by the Court for the purposes described above and to reflect the changes and developments from time to time in the proceedings before it and before the other Court. Any Directions may be supplemented, modified, and restated from time to time and such modifications, amendments, and restatements should become effective upon being accepted by both Courts. If either Court intends to supplement, change, or abrogate Directions issued under these Guidelines in the absence of joint approval by both Courts, the Court should give the other Courts involved reasonable notice of its intention to do so.

Guideline 17

Arrangements contemplated under these Guidelines do not constitute a compromise or waiver by the Court of any powers, responsibilities, or authority and do not constitute a substantive determination of any matter in controversy before the Court or before the other Court nor a waiver by any of the parties of any of their substantive rights and claims or a diminution of the effect of any of the Orders made by the Court or the other Court.

Dated this 1st day of October 2007

Hon. Chief Justice Richard Ground
Hon. Mr. Justice Ian Kawaley
Hon. Mr. Justice Geoffrey Bell