

CROSS-BORDER INSOLVENCY PRACTICE DIRECTION

No 14 of 2023

Court-to-court Communications and Cooperation in cross-border insolvency and restructuring cases

Issued by the Chief Justice after consultation with the Justices of the Commercial Division

Introduction

1. This practice direction addresses the use and adoption in cases pending before the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas (the "Court") of published guidelines relating to court-to-court communications and cooperation in cross-border insolvency and restructuring proceedings. This practice direction takes effect from the date its issue.

The Guidelines – what they cover and when they should be used

2. The efficient conduct of cross-border insolvency and restructuring proceedings frequently requires that there be a framework for communication and cooperation between courts in different jurisdictions within the confines of applicable law.
3. The Judicial Insolvency Network's *Guidelines for Communication and Cooperation between Courts in Cross-Border Insolvency Matters* (the "Guidelines") are approved for use in this jurisdiction. The Guidelines have been adopted by a number of other courts including the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware, the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York, the Chancery Division of the High Court of England and Wales, the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and the Grand Court of the Cayman Islands. A copy of the current version of the Guidelines is attached to this Practice Direction.
4. The Guidelines primarily cover the procedural rules that may be adopted and applied in particular cross-border insolvency or restructuring proceedings for regulating the manner of communications between the courts involved, the appearance of counsel in each court, notification to parties in the parallel proceedings, the acceptance as authentic of official documents or orders made in the foreign jurisdiction or court and joint hearings.
5. The overarching objective of the Guidelines is to improve in the interests of all stakeholders the efficiency and effectiveness of cross-border insolvency and

restructuring proceedings involving more than one jurisdiction by enhancing coordination and cooperation amongst the courts under whose supervision such proceedings are being conducted. The Guidelines represent best practice for dealing with such proceedings. The Guidelines are not intended to be exhaustive.

6. The Guidelines are intended to be applied either by being incorporated in a protocol between the respective officeholders which is then approved by the Court (and other courts involved as required) or by a separate order of the Court without a protocol (and orders of the other courts involved as required), in each case subject to such modifications as may be required in the circumstances.
7. Officeholders appointed in The Bahamas and interested parties involved in cross-border insolvency cases should consider, at the earliest opportunity, whether to incorporate some or all of the Guidelines with suitable modifications into an international protocol to be approved by the Court or an order of the Court adopting the Guidelines.

Official liquidators of Bahamian companies

8. Pursuant to Order 21, rule 2(1) of the *Companies Liquidation Rules*, official liquidators of companies subject to official liquidation (other than foreign companies which are the subject of an official liquidation under Part VII of the *Companies Act*) are required to consider whether or not it is appropriate to enter into an international protocol with any foreign officeholder where the company in liquidation is subject to a concurrent bankruptcy proceeding under the law of a foreign country or has assets located in a foreign country which are the subject of a bankruptcy proceeding or receivership under the law of that country.
9. The purpose of an international protocol entered into pursuant to Order 21 of the *Companies Liquidation Rules* is to promote the orderly administration of the estate of the company in liquidation and to avoid duplication of work and conflict between the official liquidator and the foreign officeholder. The international protocol agreed between the official liquidator and the foreign officeholder only takes effect and becomes binding if it is approved both by the Court and the relevant foreign court or authority. Pursuant to Order 21, rule 3 of the *Companies Liquidation Rules*, the protocol may define and allocate responsibilities between the official liquidator and foreign officeholder in respect of various matters.
10. Official liquidators should consider whether to incorporate some or all of the Guidelines with suitable modifications into an international protocol. Even if it is

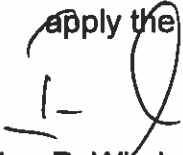
concluded that a protocol is not appropriate or that it is not appropriate to incorporate the Guidelines into such a protocol, the Guidelines with suitable modifications may be adopted by an order of the Court.

Other Bahamian officeholders

11. Other Bahamian officeholders or companies subject to insolvency or restructuring proceedings supervised by the Court may enter into a protocol incorporating some or all of the Guidelines with suitable modifications or may apply for an order of the Court adopting some or all of the Guidelines with suitable modifications.

Directions

12. Directions may be sought from the Court as to the manner in which to use and apply the Guidelines in any particular case.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I. Winder', is written over the text of paragraph 12.

Sir Ian R. Winder
Chief Justice

19 December 2023

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN COURTS IN CROSS-BORDER INSOLVENCY MATTERS

INTRODUCTION

- A. The overarching objective of these Guidelines is to improve in the interests of all stakeholders the efficiency and effectiveness of cross-border proceedings relating to insolvency or adjustment of debt opened in more than one jurisdiction (“Parallel Proceedings”) by enhancing coordination and cooperation amongst courts under whose supervision such proceedings are being conducted. These Guidelines represent best practice for dealing with Parallel Proceedings.
- B. In all Parallel Proceedings, these Guidelines should be considered at the earliest practicable opportunity.
- C. In particular, these Guidelines aim to promote:
- (i) the efficient and timely coordination and administration of Parallel Proceedings;
 - (ii) the administration of Parallel Proceedings with a view to ensuring relevant stakeholders’ interests are respected;
 - (iii) the identification, preservation, and maximisation of the value of the debtor’s assets, including the debtor’s business;
 - (iv) the management of the debtor’s estate in ways that are proportionate to the amount of money involved, the nature of the case, the complexity of the issues, the number of creditors, and the number of jurisdictions involved in Parallel Proceedings;
 - (v) the sharing of information in order to reduce costs; and
 - (vi) the avoidance or minimisation of litigation, costs, and inconvenience to the parties¹ in Parallel Proceedings.
- D. These Guidelines should be implemented in each jurisdiction in such manner as the jurisdiction deems fit².
- E. These Guidelines are not intended to be exhaustive and in each case consideration ought to be given to the special requirements in that case.
- F. Courts should consider in all cases involving Parallel Proceedings whether and how to implement these Guidelines. Courts should encourage and where necessary direct, if they have the power to do so, the parties to make the necessary applications to the court to facilitate such implementation by a protocol or order derived from these Guidelines, and encourage them to act so as to promote the objectives and aims of these Guidelines wherever possible.

¹ The term “parties” when used in these Guidelines shall be interpreted broadly.

² Possible modalities for the implementation of these Guidelines include practice directions and commercial guides.

ADOPTION & INTERPRETATION

Guideline 1: In furtherance of paragraph F above, the courts should encourage administrators in Parallel Proceedings to cooperate in all aspects of the case, including the necessity of notifying the courts at the earliest practicable opportunity of issues present and potential that may (a) affect those proceedings; and (b) benefit from communication and coordination between the courts. For the purpose of these Guidelines, “administrator” includes a liquidator, trustee, judicial manager, administrator in administration proceedings, debtor-in-possession in a reorganisation or scheme of arrangement, or any fiduciary of the estate or person appointed by the court.

Guideline 2: Where a court intends to apply these Guidelines (whether in whole or in part and with or without modification) in particular Parallel Proceedings, it will need to do so by a protocol or an order³, following an application by the parties or pursuant to a direction of the court if the court has the power to do so.

Guideline 3: Such protocol or order should promote the efficient and timely administration of Parallel Proceedings. It should address the coordination of requests for court approvals of related decisions and actions when required and communication with creditors and other parties. To the extent possible, it should also provide for timesaving procedures to avoid unnecessary and costly court hearings and other proceedings.

Guideline 4: These Guidelines when implemented are not intended to:

- (i) interfere with or derogate from the jurisdiction or the exercise of jurisdiction by a court in any proceedings including its authority or supervision over an administrator in those proceedings;
- (ii) interfere with or derogate from the rules or ethical principles by which an administrator is bound according to any applicable law and professional rules;
- (iii) prevent a court from refusing to take an action that would be manifestly contrary to the public policy of the jurisdiction; or
- (iv) confer or change jurisdiction, alter substantive rights, interfere with any function or duty arising out of any applicable law, or encroach upon any applicable law.

Guideline 5: For the avoidance of doubt, a protocol or order under these Guidelines is procedural in nature. It should not constitute a limitation on or waiver by the court of any powers, responsibilities, or authority or a substantive determination of any matter in controversy before the court or before the other court or a waiver by any of the parties of any of their substantive rights and claims.

Guideline 6: In the interpretation of these Guidelines or any protocol or order under these Guidelines, due regard shall be given to their international origin and to the need to promote good faith and uniformity in their application.

³ In the normal case, the parties will agree on a protocol derived from these Guidelines and obtain the approval of each court in which the protocol is to apply.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN COURTS

Guideline 7: A court may receive communications from a foreign court and may respond directly to them. Such communications may occur for the purpose of 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 any joint hearing where Annex A is applicable. Such communications may take place through the following methods or such other method as may be agreed by the two courts in a specific case:

- (i) 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.
- (ii) Directing counsel to transmit or deliver copies of documents, pleadings, affidavits, 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.
- (iii) Participating in two-way communications with the other court, in which case Guideline 8 should be considered.

Guideline 8: In the event of communications between courts, unless otherwise directed by any court involved in the communications whether on an *ex parte* basis or otherwise, or permitted by a protocol, the following shall apply:

- (i) In the normal case, parties may be present.
- (ii) If the parties are entitled to be present, advance notice of the communications shall be given to all parties in accordance with the rules of procedure applicable in each of the courts to be involved in the communications and the communications between the courts shall be recorded and may be transcribed. A written transcript may be prepared from a recording of the communications that, with the approval of each court involved in the communications, may be treated as the official transcript of the communications.
- (iii) Copies of any recording of the communications, of any transcript of the communications prepared pursuant to any direction of any court involved in the communications, and of any official transcript prepared from a recording may be filed as part of the record in the proceedings and made available to the parties and subject to such directions as to confidentiality as any court may consider appropriate.
- (iv) The time and place for communications between the courts shall be as directed by the courts. Personnel other than judges in each court may communicate with each other to establish appropriate arrangements for the communications without the presence of the parties.

Guideline 9: A court may direct that notice of its proceedings be given to parties in proceedings in another jurisdiction. All notices, applications, motions, and other materials served for purposes of the proceedings before the court may be ordered to be provided to such other 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.

APPEARANCE IN COURT

Guideline 10: A court may authorise a party, or an appropriate person, to appear before and be heard by a foreign court, subject to approval of the foreign court to such appearance.

Guideline 11: If permitted by its law and otherwise appropriate, a court may authorise a party to a foreign proceeding, or an appropriate person, to appear and be heard by it without thereby becoming subject to its jurisdiction.

CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS

Guideline 12: A court shall, except on proper objection on valid grounds and then only to the extent of such objection, recognise and accept as authentic the provisions of statutes, statutory or administrative regulations, and rules of court of general application applicable to the proceedings in other jurisdictions without further proof. For the avoidance of doubt, such recognition and acceptance does not constitute recognition or acceptance of their legal effect or implications.

Guideline 13: A court shall, except upon proper objection on valid grounds and then only to the extent of such objection, accept that orders made in the proceedings in other jurisdictions were duly and properly made or entered on their respective dates and accept that such orders require no further proof for purposes of the proceedings before it, subject to its law and 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. Notice of any amendments, modifications, extensions, or appellate decisions with respect to such orders shall be made to the other court(s) involved in Parallel Proceedings, as soon as it is practicable to do so.

Guideline 14: A protocol or order made by a court under these Guidelines is subject to such amendments, modifications, and extensions as may be considered appropriate by the court, and to reflect the changes and developments from time to time in any Parallel Proceedings. Notice of such amendments, modifications, or extensions shall be made to the other court(s) involved in Parallel Proceedings, as soon as it is practicable to do so.

ANNEX A (JOINT HEARINGS)

Annex A to these Guidelines relates to guidelines on the conduct of joint hearings. Annex A shall be applicable to, and shall form a part of these Guidelines, with respect to courts that may signify their assent to Annex A from time to time. Parties are encouraged to address the matters set out in Annex A in a protocol or order.

ANNEX A: JOINT HEARINGS

A court may conduct a joint hearing with another court. In connection with any such joint hearing, the following shall apply, or where relevant, be considered for inclusion in a protocol or order:

- (i) The implementation of this Annex shall not divest nor diminish any court’s respective independent jurisdiction over the subject matter of proceedings. By implementing this Annex, neither a court nor any party shall be deemed to have approved or engaged in any infringement on the sovereignty of the other jurisdiction.
- (ii) Each court shall have sole and exclusive jurisdiction and power over the conduct of its own proceedings and the hearing and determination of matters arising in its proceedings.
- (iii) Each court should be able simultaneously to hear the proceedings in the other court. Consideration should be given as to how to provide the best audio-visual access possible.
- (iv) Consideration should be given to coordination of the process and format for submissions and evidence filed or to be filed in each court.
- (v) A court may make an order permitting foreign counsel or any party in another jurisdiction to appear and be heard by it. If such an order is made, consideration needs to be given as to whether foreign counsel or any party would be submitting to the jurisdiction of the relevant court and/or its professional regulations.
- (vi) A court should be entitled to communicate with the other court in advance of a joint hearing, with or without counsel being present, to establish the procedures 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.
- (vii) A 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 outstanding issues. Consideration should be given as to whether the issues include procedural and/or substantive matters. Consideration should also be given as to whether some or all of such communications should be recorded and preserved.