

Sustained growth for the DIFC Courts as value of commercial claims surge



- Decade of full operational service marked by strong growth
- Main court sees value of cases amounting to AED 2.2 billion
- Small Claims Tribunal (SCT) witnesses a 60% rise in volume of cases
- Paperless trials and blockchain partnership to drive service excellence

Dubai, United Arab Emirates; 28 August 2018: The Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) Courts today released its key figures for the first half of 2018, with total a volume of 368 cases across all divisions, revealing a 64% increase year-on-year. The overall value of claims saw an increase of 181% over the same period, delivering strong growth for the English-language common law courts.

The volume of cases of the main Court of First Instance (CFI) continued to grow in the first half of 2018, increasing by 29% from the first half of 2017. The total value of cases in the same period, including arbitration-related cases, amounted to AED 2.2 billion.

Increased connectivity expands enforcement capabilities

The period was also notable for a significant increase in the number of enforcement cases, indicating the confidence businesses have in the DIFC Courts to collect on money judgments. The total value of enforcement claims filed amounted to AED 2.1 billion in the first half of 2018, an increase of 53% (H1 2017: AED1.4 billion). The number of cases increased considerably by 123 per cent with 87 enforcement cases in 2018, rising from 39 cases in the same period in 2017.

Small Claims Tribunal boosting access to justice

The 2018 half year results also demonstrate the increasing number of small businesses and individuals based outside of the DIFC choosing to opt-in to the DIFC Courts' jurisdiction, electing to have their commercial disputes resolved by the [Small Claims Tribunal \(SCT\)](#).

The performance of the region's first SCT was strong in the first six months of 2018, with its case load increasing by 60% to 240 claims (H1 2017: 150 cases). This growth was driven by greater awareness and the innovative use of technology, including the region's first "Smart SCT" virtual court. Reinforcing the SCT's increasing popularity for business trading, the total value of claims increased by 120% in the first half of 2018, rising from AED 13.9 million to AED 30.6 million.

Amna Al Owais, Chief Executive & Registrar, DIFC Courts, said: *"The first half of 2018 saw increases in both the volume and value of cases in almost every instance, a reflection of the DIFC Courts being a jurisdiction of choice in the Middle East region and beyond. The increase in enforcement applications also highlights our ability to assist businesses through a robust national, regional and international enforcement network. We are particularly proud of the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT), which is proving a vital mechanism for the region's SME community to access justice. Our performance so far this year is testament to the maturity of the DIFC Courts which, after over a decade of operations, continues to offer businesses access to a robust and efficient suite of dispute resolution services."*

Innovation drive elevates service excellence

In the first half of 2018, the DIFC Courts re-affirmed its commitment to harness technology for increased judicial and service efficiency. Through a [partnership with Smart Dubai](#), a taskforce will work to create the world's first Court of the Blockchain. Building on existing dispute resolution services, the alliance will initially explore how to aid verification of court judgments for cross-border enforcement.

In February of this year, the DIFC Courts became the first court in the Middle East to introduce a new secure [cloud-based e-bundling technology](#), transforming court hearings and trials into a paperless environment. This service builds upon the updated Court Management System (CMS) which enables judges, lawyers and courts staff to upload and access case information in various formats, across multiple locations and share with numerous users.