

Economic diplomacy and dispute resolution: Geneva as a centre of law — overview and summary

Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)

Geneva's vocation as a place where disputes are settled through law dates back to the *Alabama* arbitration of 1872. It developed in the twentieth century with the League of Nations, then with the World Trade Organization and the many negotiations held in the city. Today it finds expression in three fields: multilateral economic diplomacy, of which Geneva is one of the principal theatres; international commercial arbitration, for which Switzerland offers a modern law and recognised institutions; and the resolution of financial disputes, where mediation, arbitration and the courts complement one another. This chapter examines these three fields and shows how they form part of the infrastructure of the financial centre and of commodity trading.

1 In five sentences

1. Geneva is a central theatre of multilateral economic diplomacy, home to the World Trade Organization and its dispute settlement system, which had received 631 requests for consultations by the end of 2024 despite the crisis of its Appellate Body.
2. Swiss international arbitration law, based on Chapter 12 of the Private International Law Act, gives the parties broad autonomy and a single avenue of recourse before the Federal Supreme Court, with international enforcement secured by the New York Convention.
3. The Swiss Arbitration Centre, founded in 2021 by the chambers of commerce and the Swiss Arbitration Association, administers proceedings under the Swiss Rules and serves as a recognised mediation body for financial disputes.
4. Arbitration occupies a particular place in commodity trading and in investment protection, while mediation and the courts deal with banking and financial litigation.

Economic diplomacy and dispute resolution

5. Geneva as a centre of law gives the financial centre legal certainty, neutrality, expertise and economic activity, provided that the integrity of its practitioners is preserved.

For general information only. This article does not constitute legal or tax advice, does not replace advice on an individual case and creates no lawyer-client relationship. It reflects the legal position as of September 2026.

Online version: helveticaregister.com/geneva-economic-diplomacy-and-dispute-resolution-geneva-as-a-centre-of-law-overview-and