Steptoe Bolsters Brazil, Latin America Practices by Associating with Fernando Merino

October 31, 2017

Overview

(October 31, 2017, Washington, DC) — Steptoe & Johnson LLP is strengthening its Brazilian and Latin American practices with the association of Fernando Quintana Merino, a Brazilian lawyer admitted to the bar in Brazil. Mr. Merino initially will be a consultant to the firm based in Brazil, but is ultimately expected to relocate to Washington. He will focus his practice on the areas of compliance, investigations, corporate governance, regulatory and white-collar enforcement, disputes, corporate restructurings, private equity, and other financial services matters.

Mr. Merino brings extensive international experience in Latin America, Europe, and the United States managing legal and compliance departments for major industrial and retail companies as well as financial institutions. He has held different positions in the financial services sector, working with CS Garantia, JP Morgan Chase, and Merrill Lynch from 1997-2008. At each of those firms, he served either as senior counsel or as Brazil or Latin America general counsel and chief compliance officer. In 2008, he became the general counsel of Companhia Siderurgica Nacional, the largest integrated steel manufacturer in Latin America, with interests in mining, transportation, and other sectors. In 2014, he became the general counsel of Grupo Pão de Açucar, one of the largest companies in Brazil and a multinational in the food, consumer goods, and e-commerce industries.

Most recently, Mr. Merino has been acting as an independent board member at Eletropaulo Metropolitana Eletricidade de São Paulo S.A., the largest energy distributor in Latin America and Igua Ambiental S.A., one of the largest water and sewage companies in Brazil. Mr. Merino is a professor at Insper Law School, a law school with campuses in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

“Fernando is well known and highly respected in the Brazilian business and legal communities,” said Steptoe Chair Phil West. “During his time as corporate counsel and in compliance roles, he has gained significant experience with the type of complex regulatory and dispute matters that are a major part of Steptoe’s practice, and his association with us will help further develop the firm’s Brazil and Latin America practices.”

Steptoe’s Brazil team is spearheaded by Lucinda Low, head of the firm’s Compliance, Investigations, Trade and Enforcement Department, who has lived in Brazil and is fluent in Portuguese, and Pablo Bentes, a native of Brazil who joined the firm in 2012 after serving six years as a legal officer in the Appellate Body Secretariat of the World Trade Organization in Geneva.

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Mr. Merino commented: “Steptoe has an outstanding reputation in international regulatory and dispute matters, areas which are increasingly important in Brazil. These matters will continue to become more multijurisdictional, complex and integrated, making Steptoe’s experience and capabilities very important. I look forward to helping the firm expand their Brazil and Latin America practices even further. The firm recognizes the importance of the Brazilian economy and the fact that Brazilian companies have become major investors in the United States, Europe, and China, among other destinations, and that many US and other non-Brazilian multinationals have significant operations in Brazil. Brazil expects a major inflow of foreign capital in the upcoming years and Brazilian companies are expecting to further internationalize their activities. We are well positioned to help clients on those matters.”

Steptoe has one of the largest and most experienced International Regulation & Compliance teams of any major international law firm in the world with 30 lawyers dedicated to this practice in offices around the globe. The team covers regulatory requirements such as export controls, economic sanctions, anti-corruption, anti-money laundering, customs and immigration, and investment reviews by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States. The group has earned rankings and recommendations from Global Investigations Review, WorldECR, Chambers Global, Chambers USA, Chambers Asia-Pacific, Chambers Latin America, The Legal 500, Law360, and China Law & Practice. Most recently, on October 26, Ms. Low was presented with Global Investigations Review’s 2017 Outstanding Career Award.

Mr. Merino received his legal degree in Brazil from the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro. He earned an LL.M. from Columbia University. He has worked in New York, London and Brazil.

About Steptoe

Steptoe & Johnson LLP is an international law firm widely recognized for vigorous advocacy in complex litigation and arbitration, successful representation of clients before governmental agencies, and creative and practical advice in guiding business transactions. The firm has more than 500 lawyers and other professionals in offices in Beijing, Brussels, Chicago, London, Los Angeles, New York, Phoenix, San Francisco, and Washington. For more information, visit www.steptoe.com.

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