

Ex-Grupo Modelo counsel joins Von Wobeser as partner

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Pablo Jiménez Zorrilla

Mexican law firm Von Wobeser y Sierra SC has hired the former vice president of legal and corporate affairs at brewing company Grupo Modelo as partner and co-head of the M&A practice – marking the firm's first-ever lateral partner hire.

Pablo Jiménez Zorrilla officially joins Von Wobeser today, taking the firm's partner count to 18. He will co-lead the corporate and M&A practice alongside partner Luis Burgueño.

Over the last nearly three years, Jiménez worked in a non-legal position as global vice president of reputation and communication at brewing giant Anheuser-Busch InBev in New York. Prior to that, he served at the company's Mexican subsidiary Grupo Modelo – which is a big client of Von Wobeser – as vice president of legal and corporate affairs. Previously, Jiménez was the general counsel of Mexican cinema group Cinépolis. He also worked at Mexican firm Galicia Abogados (then called Galicia y Robles) for nearly a decade.

Law firm founder and member of the executive committee Claus von Wobeser says Jiménez's incorporation will add significant value both to the firm and its clients. "I have worked with Pablo in different capacities and roles and I have always been impressed not only by his exceptional knowledge and qualifications as a lawyer, but by his strategic perspective and managerial, leadership and communication skills," he adds.

Jiménez will work closely with the executive committee on the firm's strategy, identifying growth opportunities and supervising the communication and business development functions. One of Jiménez's first projects will be to set up an ESG practice, expected to be launched in a few weeks' time. It will draw from the firm's capabilities in various legal areas – such as banking, compliance, environment and corporate governance – and will be coordinated by several partners, including Jiménez. He worked closely on ESG matters in his previous role. "By bringing together experts from different practice areas of the firm, we will put together a 'package' so we can provide integrated ESG solutions to clients that need that type of advice for their investment decisions and sustainable financings," says Jiménez. As Von Wobeser does not have a capital markets practice, its ESG group will not target green, social or sustainable bond issuances.

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Jiménez – who is Von Wobeser's first partner hire since the firm was founded in 1986 – is based in Texas, but will travel frequently between there and Mexico. He is qualified as a foreign legal consultant in the Texas but will only be practising Mexican law. "From a strategic standpoint, it makes sense for me to be in the US. It certainly allows me to be closer to existing clients, but it is also an opportunity to develop new client relationships and to strengthen bonds with US firms with whom we work closely," he says.

Executive committee member and antitrust head Fernando Carreño says having Jiménez in the US will allow Von Wobeser to capitalise on growing outward investment in the US from Mexican companies and individuals. "That pace is likely to accelerate as the US economy is expected to have a faster recovery than the Mexican one," he adds.

Jiménez will co-head the corporate and M&A department with Burgueño, who is another of the firm's executive committee members. "Pablo played a key role in multiple M&A transactions during his tenure at Cinépolis and Grupo Modelo and that in-house perspective will help us better understand and serve our clients' needs," he says.

With some investment uncertainty in Mexico – where Andrés Manuel López Obrador's government has tended to favour state-owned companies like Pemex and CFE over private actors – Burgueño recognises that Mexico will continue to face challenges in the short-term, but for companies taking a longer-term perspective investment opportunities will remain strong. "The pandemic has reaffirmed the need to build resilient regional supply chains and the new United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement and Mexico's strategic proximity to the US gives us a natural opportunity to play a significant role in this trend," he adds.

While Jiménez is Von Wobeser's first-ever partner hire, it has recruited lawyers to other senior roles in the past. Last year it **brought** on former Supreme Court judge Margarita Luna Ramos in an of counsel position. Von Wobeser, which has otherwise favoured organic growth, **promoted** two to partner and five to counsel earlier this year, strengthening its corporate and M&A, disputes, antitrust and energy departments. That followed a two-partner promotion in 2020, which **added** to its IP and corporate groups.

The firm is highly regarded for its arbitration practice, as well as complex litigation. Other strong practices include corporate and M&A, antitrust and tax.

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