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**Draft Chapter  
on  
Plurality of Obligors and/or Obligees**

by

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAFT

This is a revised draft of the future chapter of the UNIDROIT Principles on Plurality of obligors and/or obligees, taking into account the discussions which took place at the Rome meeting in 2009. The document has been prepared for the Hamburg meeting of January 25-28, 2010.

*“Notes by the Rapporteur”* are explanations given to the members of the Drafting Committee.

M. Fontaine  
November 2009

## Section 1 : Plurality of obligors

### Article 1.1 (Definitions)

**When several obligors are bound by the same obligation towards an obligee :**

- 1) the obligations are joint and several when each obligor is bound for the whole obligation;**
- 2) the obligations are separate when each obligor is bound only for its share.**

#### COMMENT

This Chapter deals with situations where an obligation binds several obligors, or gives rights to several obligees.

Section 1 concerns plurality of obligors, the more common situation.

#### 1. Several obligors

There are frequent cases when an obligation binds several obligors.

##### Illustrations

1. Companies A, B and C decide to join efforts to penetrate a new market abroad. They need financing and they obtain a loan together from Bank X. Companies A, B and C are co-obligors of the obligation to reimburse the loan.
2. Further to the submission they have filed together, Contractors A and B are awarded the contract for the construction of a bridge. Contractors A and B are co-obligors of the obligation to build the bridge.
3. A large industrial plant has to be insured against fire and other hazards. The risk is too large for the capacity of any single insurer. Several insurers co-insure the risk. These insurers are co-obligors of the obligation to cover the risk.
4. Bank X grants a loan to Company A and but requires guarantee. Parent Company B accepts to bind itself with Company A to reimbursement of the loan. Companies A and B are co-obligors of the obligation to reimburse the loan.

#### 2. The same obligation

This Section only applies if the different obligors are bound by the same obligation.

It also frequently happens that several obligors are involved in the same operation, but with distinct obligations. They are not co-obligors subject to the rules of the present section.

## Illustration

5. A new airplane is being built. Many sub-contractors are involved in the various elements. For instance, Sub-contractor A is in charge of profiling the wings and Sub-contractor B of studying the electronic equipment. Their respective obligations are different. They are not “co-obligors”.

The “same obligation” usually arises from a single contract, but not necessarily. In Illustration 1 and 2 above, there will normally be a single loan contract, or a single construction contract binding the different obligors. But in co-insurance (Illustration 3), it is frequent that each insurer, even though undertaking to cover the same risk, has its own distinct contract with the insured. The guarantee offered in Illustration 4 will often be granted in a distinct contract. Other examples of obligations being undertaken by a different contract appear when obligations are transferred by agreement (see below, Article 9.2.1 *et seq.*).

However the obligations concerned must be contractual, whether they stem out of a single or out of several contracts. Tortious obligations of multiple tortfeasors are not ruled by the present Chapter, since these Principles govern international commercial contracts. But contractual damage claims may fall under this Chapter.

### 3. Two main types

Article 1.1 defines the two main types of obligations appearing in practice when several obligors are bound by the same obligation towards an obligee.

Either each obligor is bound for the whole obligation, which means the obligee may require performance from any of them (see below, article 1.3), subject to contributory claims between obligors at a later stage (see below, article 1.10).

Or each obligor is bound only for its share, entitling the obligee to claim only that much from each of the obligors.

In the former situation, which will be the default rule (see below, article 1.2), obligations are called “joint and several”. In the latter situation, obligations are called “separate”.

### 4. Other possible situations

These two main types are the most common, but this Section does not intend to cover all possible arrangements.

Other situations which can occur are those of so-called “joint” or “communal” obligations, in which the obligors are bound to render performance together, and the obligee may claim performance only from all of them together. A sometimes cited example is that of a group of musicians having undertaken to perform a string quartet. Situations of this type are of less practical importance. When they occur, they are subject to their own contractual arrangements, which often treat them as either separate or joint and several obligations.

*Note by the Rapporteur*

*The black letters were already accepted at Rome 2008. Several suggestions were made at Rome 2009 concerning the Comments. Cf. SR 2009, Nos. 503-512. They have been taken into consideration in the present Draft.*

## **Article 1.2**

*(Presumption of joint and several obligations)*

**When several obligors are bound by the same obligation towards an obligee, they are presumed to be jointly and severally bound, unless the circumstances indicate otherwise.**

### COMMENT

#### **1. Default rule**

In commercial practice the normal case is that several obligors having undertaken the same obligation are jointly and severally bound towards the obligee. This justifies the default rule expressed in Article 1.2.

##### Illustration

1. Companies A, B and C have together obtained a loan from Bank X (as in Illustration 1 under Article 1.1). The loan contract fails to indicate how each of them is bound. They are presumed to be joint and several obligors, i.e., towards the bank, each of them is bound for the whole amount of the loan.

#### **2. Circumstances indicating otherwise**

The presumption of joint and several obligations is rebutted when the circumstances indicate otherwise. This will often be the result of an explicit contractual provision to the contrary.

##### Illustration

2. Insurers A, B and C have agreed to co-insure an industrial plant (as in Illustration 3 under Article 1.1). The scheme will usually provide that each co-insurer is only bound for a percentage of the risk.

Other circumstances can also discard the presumption that plural obligors are jointly and severally bound.

##### Illustration

3. The facts are the same as in Illustration 2, but Insurers D, E and F have omitted to stipulate that they are not jointly and severally bound. However, the very purpose of co-insurance is to cover large risks without putting any insurer beyond the limits of its own capacity. This can be considered as a circumstance indicating that Insurers D, E and F are only bound for their respective shares.

*Note by the Rapporteur*

*Further to suggestions made at Rome 2009, the black letters have been amended by deleting two words (“the same”) and the opening sentence of Illustration 3 has been modified. Cf. SR 2009, Nos. 513-515.*

### **Article 1.3**

*(Obligee’s rights against joint and several obligors)*

**When obligors are jointly and severally bound, the obligee may require performance from any one of them, until full performance has been received.**

#### COMMENT

The main effect of joint and several obligations from the obligors’ point of view has already been stated in the definition given in Article 1.1 above : each obligor is bound for the whole obligation.

Article 1.3 states the main effect for the obligee : it may require performance from each obligor, until full performance has been received.

#### Illustrations

1. Farmers A, B and C have bought a tractor together, for shared use in their respective fields. They are jointly and severally bound to pay the price of USD 45,000. Seller X may require payment of the whole sum from A, B or C. X’s claim is extinguished when it has received full performance, from one of more of its obligors.

2. The facts are the same as in Illustration 1. In case A pays only USD 30,000 (in spite of being bound for USD 45,000), X may then claim USD 15,000 from B or C. If X, at this stage, only receives USD 10,000 from B (though B was still bound for USD 15,000), X may still claim USD 5,000 from C.

*Note by the Rapporteur*

*Further to a general suggestion made at Rome 2009, the opening sentence of Illustration 3 has been modified. Cf. SR 2009, Nos. 515, 516.*

### Article 1.4

*(Availability of defences and rights of set-off)*

**A joint and several obligor against whom a claim is made by the obligee may assert all the defences and rights of set-off that are personal to it or that are common to all the co-obligors, but may not assert defences or rights of set-off that are personal to one or several of the other co-obligors.**

#### COMMENT

This provision deals with the possibilities for a joint and several obligor to assert different defences and rights of set-off. It distinguishes between, on one side, defences and rights of set-off that are personal to one of the obligors, or common to all of them, and, on the other side, defences and rights of set-off which are personal to one or several of the other co-obligors.

#### Illustrations

1. Together, Companies A, B and C have bought from Licensor X a licence permitting shared use of know-how apt to improve the manufacture of their respective products. The royalties are in principle jointly and severally due. Company A then discovers that when it joined B and C in purchasing the licence, it was under the influence of a relevant mistake, within the meaning of Article 3.5 of these Principles : the concerned technology is not adequate for A's manufacturing process. If X requires Company A to pay the royalties, A may invoke its own mistake against X. On the contrary, if B and C did not make any similar mistake when purchasing the license (they can use the technology), they may not refuse to pay the royalties if invited by X, because the defence is personal to A. But if all were mistaken, each obligor may invoke the mistake against X.
2. The initial facts are the same as in Illustration 1. Company A, however, takes the initiative to send a notice of avoidance to Licensor X, under article 3.14, leading to partial avoidance of the contract under article 3.16. Such partial avoidance, when effective, can then also be asserted by Companies B and C as a common defence, since it affects the contract in itself.
3. Companies A and B jointly and severally have undertaken to purchase a certain quantity of steel abroad, from Seller X. Government authorities in the buyers' country declare an embargo on all trade with X's country, rendering the purchase illegal. This is a common defence which each of the co-obligors may assert against X.
4. Bank X has loaned EUR 2,000,000 to joint and several obligors A and B. As a result of the selling of shares belonging to A on the stock market, Bank X then becomes A's obligor for an amount of EUR 500,000. Obligor A may exercise its right of set-off against Bank X, with the effects provided in Article 1.5 below. On the contrary, Obligor B may not assert this right, which is personal to A.

*Note by the Rapporteur*

*Cf. SR 2009, Nos. 517.*

*An amendment to the black letters suggested at Rome 2009 has been taken into consideration : "who is sued" has been replaced by "against whom a claim is made".*

*Illustration 2 is new. It is submitted as an answer to a point raised during the discussion at Rome 2009, but not reflected in the SR 2009.*

### **Article 1.5**

*(Effect of performance and set-off)*

**Performance or set-off by a joint and several obligor or set-off by the obligee against one joint and several obligor discharges the other obligors in relation to the obligee to the extent of the performance or set-off.**

COMMENT

#### **1. Performance by a joint and several obligor**

If one of the co-obligors has already performed the obligation, fully or partially, the other obligors may successfully assert this as a defence should the obligee still attempt to claim performance from them.

Illustrations

1. Companies A, B and C are jointly bound to reimburse a loan of EUR 100,000. Upon Lender X's request, Company A fully reimburses the loan. Co-obligors B and C can avail themselves of Company A's performance in case Lender X would still claim against them.

2. The facts are the same as in Illustration 1, but Company A only reimbursed EUR 30,000. Companies B and C are still jointly and severally bound for EUR 70,000 (see above, Article 1.3), but they may invoke Company A's partial payment in case Lender X would still require the full amount from them.

#### **2. Set-off**

A similar rule is applicable in the case of set-off between the obligee and one of the obligors. Rights of set-off were already mentioned in Article 1.4, where the issue was to determine which of the co-obligors could assert rights of set-off. Article 1.5 deals with the subsequent issue of the effects of set-off, once it has been exercised (on the rules governing set-off itself, see Articles 8.1 to 8.5 of these Principles).



### Illustration

3. The facts are the same as in the preceding illustrations : Companies A, B and C are jointly bound to reimburse a loan of EUR 100,000 to Lender X. However, in a different context, Company A has become X's obligee for an amount of EUR 60,000. If Company A exercises its right of set-off against X by serving appropriate notice (as provided in Article 8.1.3 of these Principles), it will have the same effect as partial performance by A of its joint and several obligation, thus discharging B and C for the corresponding amount.

The same rule applies if the right of set-off has been exercised by the obligee against one of the joint and several obligors.

### Illustration

4. The initial facts are the same as in Illustration 3, but it is X who takes the initiative to give the set-off notice to A. The effects are identical. Company A is discharged for the amount of set-off (EUR 60,000), and the other co-obligors B and C are also discharged for the same amount.

## 3. Other circumstances

There can be other circumstances where an obligation can be discharged without being performed, such as the case of merger of obligations. This can happen when an obligor inherits from its obligee (or vice-versa), or, in a situation more relevant in the context of international trade, when the obligor and obligee companies merge.

However, since the Principles do not include any chapter on merger of obligations, no specific black letter rule has been provided concerning the effect of merger of obligations on joint and several obligors.

### *Note by the Rapporteur*

*A few linguistic amendments were brought to the Comments. Cf. SR 2009, Nos. 518-519.*

## Article 1.6

*(Effect of release or settlement)*

**(1) Release of one joint and several obligor, or settlement with one joint and several obligor, discharges all the other obligors for the share of the released or settling obligor, unless the circumstances indicate otherwise.**

**(2) When the other obligors are discharged for the share of the released obligor, they have no more contributory claim against the released obligor under article 1.10.**

## COMMENT

**1. Release of one joint and several obligor**

If the obligee releases one of its joint and several obligors with no further specification, the default rule stated in Article 1.6 is that the release concerns the share of the released obligor only, as determined by Article 1.9 below. As a consequence, the other obligors are discharged for the share of the released obligor only, and remain bound for the difference.

## Illustration

1. Bank X lends EUR 300,000 to Companies A, B and C. The obligors are jointly and severally bound; their respective contributory shares are equal, i.e. EUR 100,000 each. Bank X releases Company A, with no further specification. The consequence for Companies B and C is that they are released for the amount of Company A's share of EUR 100,000. Companies B and C remain jointly and severally bound towards Bank X for an amount of EUR 200,000.

**2. Settlement with one joint and several obligor**

Sometimes the obligee receives payment from one of the co-obligors of an amount less than that obligor's share as determined by Article 1.9 below, as part of a separate settlement with that obligor, pursuant to which the payment received is accepted as discharging all of the settling obligor's share. Consequently, the other obligors' joint and several obligations are reduced by the full initial amount of the settling obligor's share, and not only by the paid amount.

## Illustration

2. Investors A, B and C are jointly and severally bound to pay USD 3,000,000 to Seller X for an acquisition of shares. Investor A and Seller X come to a settlement of different disputes between themselves. One of the terms of the settlement is that Investor A will be discharged of its obligations towards Seller X under the share purchase agreement by paying an amount of USD 600,000, i.e. USD 400,000 less than Investor A's contributory share towards the other co-obligors. Under such circumstances, Seller X may not claim the whole remaining USD 2,400,000 against Investors B and C. Their joint and several obligations are reduced by the full initial amount of Company A's share, i.e. USD 1,000,000. They are still jointly and severally bound for USD 2,000,000 only.

**3. Circumstances indicating otherwise**

There can be circumstances where the other obligors are discharged for another amount than that of the released or settling obligor's share.

For instance, the obligee may release one of its obligors only for part of the latter's share, as determined by Article 1.9 below. The other obligors will be discharged only for the amount of that released part. All obligors will remain jointly and severally bound for the reduced total amount.

## Illustration

3. In the same situation as in Illustration 1, Bank X releases Company A for an amount of EUR 60,000. The consequence for Companies B and C is that they are released for the same amount of EUR 60,000. Companies A, B and C remain jointly and severally bound towards Bank X for an amount of EUR 240,000.

On the other hand, the obligee may also intend to fully release all of its obligors. If the obligee expresses its intention to do, Article 1.6 will not be applicable.

As to settlement, it will very frequently not be separate, but concern all joint and several obligors. The consequences on the different obligors' obligations will then be determined by the terms of the settlement agreed by all parties, and the contributory claims will be adjusted accordingly.

## 4. No more contributory claim

When the obligee has released one of the co-obligors, or settled with it, and the other co-obligors have been discharged of the released obligor's share, the other co-obligors have no more contributory claim against the released obligor.

## Illustrations

4. The facts are the same as in Illustration 1 : Company A was released by Bank X, while Companies B and C remained jointly and severally bound for an amount of EUR 200,000. If Company B pays EUR 200,000 to Bank X, it has a contributory claim of EUR 100,000 against Company C, but no claim against Company A.

5. The facts are the same as in Illustration 2 : Investors B and C remained jointly and severally bound for an amount of USD 2,000,000. If Investor B pays USD 2,000,000 to Seller X, it has a contributory claim of USD 1,000,000 against Investor C; but it has no claim against Investor A, even though the latter has paid only USD 600,000 to Seller X, as agreed in their separate settlement.

The principle of good faith and fair dealing (art. 1.7) may however interfere in certain circumstances.

## Illustration

6. The initial facts are the same as in Illustration 1 : Companies A, B and C are jointly and severally bound to reimburse EUR 300,000 to Bank X, their respective contributory shares being equal, i.e. EUR 100,000 each. Company B, however, appears to become insolvent, with the result that under article 1.13 below, Companies A and C's respective contributory shares would be increased to EUR 150,000. Company A hastens to negotiate a separate settlement with Bank X, under which Company A is discharged of its obligation towards Bank X by paying an amount of EUR 50,000. Company B actually becomes insolvent. Under article 1.6 (1), Company C's obligation towards Bank X has been reduced to EUR 200,000, but under article 1.6 (2), it could not recover any contributory share from Company A. In such circumstances, it could be argued that Company A, when settling with Bank X, has acted to the detriment of Company C, contrary to the requirements of good faith and fair dealing. Company A may be denied the right to rely on article 1.6 (2).

*Note by the Rapporteur*

*This article 1.6, merging into a single provision the rules on release and settlement, formerly contained in distinct articles, was accepted at Rome 2009.*

*In the Comments, we have interverted points 3 and 4, in order to correspond to their order in the black letters. We have also added a development and an illustration under the point “No more contributory claim”, inspired by the text that our colleagues Brödermann and Chappuis had submitted to me after our discussions at Rome 2009 (SR, Nos. 521-526).*

### **Article 1.7**

*(Effect of expiration or suspension of limitation period)*

**(1) Expiration of the limitation period of the obligee’s rights against one joint and several obligor does not affect:**

**(a) the obligations to the obligee of the other joint and several obligors; or**

**(b) the rights of recourse between the joint and several obligors under article 1.10.**

**(2) If the obligee initiates proceedings under Articles 10.5, 10.6 or 10.7 against one joint and several obligor, the running of the limitation period is also suspended against the other joint and several obligors.**

#### COMMENT

#### **1. Expiration of the limitation period against one obligor**

It can happen that the obligee’s rights against one (or several) of the joint and several obligors have become time-barred. This will not prevent the obligee from exercising its claim against other co-obligors whose obligations are not yet affected by the expiration of a period of limitation.

#### Illustration

1. Consultant X claims that Companies A and B are jointly and severally bound to pay fees of USD 500,000 on January 1, 2006. A and B refuse to pay, arguing that the services rendered by X were unsatisfactory. The parties enter into lengthy discussions. In the course of 2008, Company B comes to acknowledge Consultant X’s rights, but Company A continues to challenge them. In March 2009, X finally sues both clients for payment. More than three years after the date when X’s fees were due (see article 10.2 of these Principles), X’s claim against Company A is time barred. The situation is different for Company B, who has acknowledged the right of the obligee before the expiration of the limitation period, thus triggering

the running of a new period (see article 10.4 of these Principles). Consultant X can still claim USD 500,000 from Company B.

Co-obligors who have paid the obligee under such circumstances can exercise their rights of recourse pursuant to article 1.10 below, even against the co-obligor who could avail itself of the expiration of a period of limitation against the obligee. Such rights of recourse are subject to their own limitation periods.

#### Illustration

2. In the case described in Illustration I, Company B, after paying USD 500,000 to Consultant X, can claim contribution against Company A under Article 1.10 below.

## **2. Suspension of the limitation period against one obligor**

Initiation by the obligee of legal or arbitral proceedings or an A.D.R. procedure against one of the joint and several obligors suspends the running of the limitation period against that obligor, under Articles 10.5, 10.6 or 10.7 of these Principles. Article 1.7 (2) extends the effect of suspension against the other co-obligors.

#### Illustration

3. Co-buyers A and B are jointly and severally bound to pay a price of GBP 800,000 to Seller X, which was due on December 31, 2005. In spite of several reminders, A and B are still in default near the end of the three-year limitation period. On December 20, 2008, Seller X initiates legal proceedings against Buyer A. The limitation period is suspended not only against Buyer A, but also against Buyer B.

The rule in Article 1.7 (2), which creates effects towards all co-obligors, corresponds to a different approach than the rule in Article 1.7 (1), which provides for individual effects. There is no contradiction, since different effects are concerned : those of expiration of the limitation period, and those of initiating legal proceedings. The solution retained in paragraph (2) has the cost advantage of avoiding the necessity to initiate proceedings against all obligors. The obligee will however keep in mind the rule in article 1.8, concerning effect of judgment.

#### *Note by the Rapporteur*

*The provision in Paragraph (2) was accepted at Rome 2009 (SR 2009, Nos. 529-536); Paragraph (1) had been accepted before (SR 2008, Nos. 446-447).*

*A few linguistic amendments were made to the Comments.*

**Article 1.8**  
*(Effect of judgment)*

**(1) A decision by a court as to the liability to the obligee of one joint and several obligor does not affect:**

- (a) the obligations to the obligee of the other joint and several obligors; or**
- (b) the rights of recourse between the joint and several obligors under article 1.10.**

**(2) However, the other joint and several obligors may avail themselves of such a decision. In such a case, the rights of recourse between the joint and several obligors under article 1.10 are affected accordingly.**

COMMENT

**1. No effect of the other obligors' obligations**

If the obligee sues only one (or some) of the joint and several obligors, any judicial decision will not in principle affect the obligations of the co-obligors who were not called to court. Whatever the decision, the other obligors will still be bound in the original terms.

Illustrations

1. Bank X has loaned EUR 1,000,000 to joint and several Borrowers A and B. Borrower A is sued for reimbursement by Bank X and the court condemns Borrower A to pay EUR 1,000,000 to Bank X. This decision in itself does not affect Borrower B's obligation; B is still bound to pay EUR 1,000,000 to Bank X. Naturally, if the judgment is enforced and Borrower A pays EUR 1,000,000 to Bank A, Borrower B' obligation towards X will be extinguished under Article 1.5 and B will be subject to A's contributory recourse under Article 1.10.

2. Company A and Company B have jointly and severally undertaken to provide transportation for Company X's deliveries to its clients. Performance is defective and Company X sues Company A. The court condemns Company A to pay damages. Company B's obligations are not increased by the amount of such damages.

**2. No effect on the rights of recourse**

A court decision rendered against one joint and several obligor has also no effect on the rights of recourse between the joint and several obligors under article 1.10.

Illustration

3. The facts are the same as in Illustration 2. Company A pays the damages ordered by court to Company X. Company B may not claim to recover part of such damages from Company B.

### 3. Right of the other joint and several obligors to avail themselves of the decision

The principle stated in paragraph (1) of this Article does not have to be enforced when the other co-obligors find their interest in relying on the decision. For such cases, paragraph (2) grants the other joint and several obligors the right to avail themselves of the decision.

#### Illustrations

4. Art collectors A and B have joined in purchasing a painting at an auction and they are jointly and severally bound to pay the price of GBP 800,000. The price is not paid and the auction house sues Collector A. The tribunal accepts some of A's arguments concerning the quality of the painting, which appears to have been restored, and reduces the price to GBP 600,000. Collector B may avail itself of that decision to benefit from the same reduction of its obligations towards the auction house.

5. The initial facts are the same as in Illustration 4, but Collector A's refusal to pay the auction house is grounded on a claim that the painting is a fake. This is confirmed by an expertise ordered by the court. Accordingly, the court avoids the contract. Collector B may also avail itself of that decision to be discharged of its obligations towards the auction house.

### 4. Rights of recourse affected accordingly

If a joint and several obligor avails itself of a court decision rendered against its co-obligor, the right of recourse of the latter will be affected accordingly.

#### Illustration

6. The initial facts are the same as in Illustration 4. Collector A's obligation towards the auction house has been reduced to GBP 600,000. If Collector A, after having paid this amount to the auction house, initiates a contributory recourse against Collector B, the latter may avail itself of the court decision to have its contributory share reduced accordingly.

#### *Note by the Rapporteur*

*The initial version of this provision, inspired by PECL art. 10:109 (same text in DCFR art. III.-4:110), did not raise any discussion until Rome 2009. There, sparked by reactions to the first illustration submitted in the Comments, a vivid debate took place (SR 2009, Nos. 537-560). In conclusion, the Rapporteur was invited to "prepare two alternative versions of the article with appropriate illustrations, so as to permit the Group to take a final decision at its next session" (No. 560).*

*We do not come with two alternative versions, since the debate in Rome did not really gravitate around two main tendencies. Some accepted the proposed black letters but believed the illustration was inadequate. Some wanted to change the black letters, but no precise alternative proposal was submitted. Some even wanted to delete the provision. Instead we submit an amended version of the preceding text. Paragraph (1)*

*takes over the initial solution as the principle rule. But a paragraph (2) is added, which we hope will meet most of the objections raised at Rome 2009.*

*Before coming to this proposal, we have done some further research in comparative law (admittedly, limited so far to some civil law countries).*

*The issue of the effect of judgments is far from being met in all codifications. For instance, there is no corresponding provision in the Civil codes of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland (C.O.), Quebec, Russia and Estonia, nor in the OHADA draft. This does not necessarily mean that the issue is not known in some of these countries (in France and Belgium, for instance, there is case law on the subject).*

*Where specific provisions appear, they reveal a variety of solutions. PECL and the DCFR seem to be isolated with their position depriving the court decision of all effects on the other obligors' obligations (i.e. our Principles would also take an original stand were we to follow this model as initially suggested).*

*At the other extreme, a provision of the Spanish Civil Code identified other joint and several co-obligors to the one who was a party to the court decision (art. 1252 par. 3)(it seems that this provision was abrogated in 2000 – it still has to be verified whether it has been replaced). The new Civil Code of Lithuania provides that in principle, a court decision rendered against one joint and several obligee is effective against all co-obligors (art. 6.14).*

*Other codifications have more complex solutions. The German BGB restricts the effects of judgment to the concerned obligor, but only “soweit sich nicht aus dem Schuldverhältnis ein anderes ergibt” (tentative translation : “insofar as nothing else results from the obligation”). The Italian Code first states that the decision has no effect against the other obligors, but then adds that these other obligors may invoke it against the obligee, except if the decision is based on grounds personal to the co-obligor (art. 1306). The Portuguese Civil Code offers a solution similar to the Italian one (art. 522).*

*We have been impressed by the latter approach, taken by Italy and Portugal. It seems that it could solve many of the difficulties raised during the discussion at Rome 2009. It states a firm principle, coherent with the traditional relative effect of judgments, but it opens the door for an exception justified by the specific situation of joint and several obligors, leaving it to the obligors concerned themselves to decide whether it is their interest to invoke it. The revised version of article 1.8 is inspired by the Italian and Portuguese solutions.*

### **Article 1.9**

*(Apportionment between joint and several obligors)*

**As between themselves, joint and several obligors are bound in equal shares, unless the circumstances indicate otherwise.**



## COMMENT

Articles 1.9 to 1.13 of this Section deal with contributory claims. An obligor who has performed the obligation in favour of the obligee has a claim against the other joint and several obligors to recuperate their respective shares.

The first issue is to determine these respective shares. As a default rule, Article 1.9 states that such shares are equal.

## Illustration

1. Companies A and B have borrowed EUR 10,000,000 from Bank X to finance the acquisition of stock in another company. In principle, A and B's shares in the final allocation will be EUR 500,000 each.

However, circumstances can indicate otherwise, i.e. that the shares are unequal. This will often result from the contractual arrangements between the co-obligors.

## Illustration

2. The facts are the same as in Illustration 1 : Bank W has loaned EUR 10,000,000 to Companies A and B to finance an acquisition of stock. However, A and B have agreed that their respective participations in the acquisition would be 75 % and 25 %. These percentages will also govern the final allocation.

It can even happen that the circumstances will indicate that some obligors are to finally bear the whole amount of the obligation. This is the case when a party agreed to be bound as joint and several obligor not because of its own interest in the operation, but to serve as guarantee for the other ("main") obligor.

## Illustration

3. Company A applies for a loan of EUR 10,000,000 from Bank X. The loan is granted on the condition that Company B would intervene as joint and several obligor. The circumstances indicate that the shares in the final allocation should be 100 % for A and 0 % for B.

*Note by the Rapporteur*

*The suggestions made at Rome 2009 for amendments in the Comments have been incorporated. Cf. SR 2009, Nos. 561-565.*

**Article 1.10**

*(Extent of contributory claim)*

**A joint and several obligor who has performed more than its share may claim the excess from any of the other obligors to the extent of each obligor's unperformed share.**

## COMMENT

After a joint and several obligor has paid more than its share to the obligee, it has contributory claims against the others to recover the excess, on the basis of the respective shares.

## Illustrations

1. In Illustration 1 under Article 1.9, Companies A and B have borrowed EUR 10,000,000 from Bank X to finance an acquisition of shares in another company. A and B's shares are in principle equal. If A has reimbursed the full amount to Bank X, it can claim contribution from B for the amount in excess of A's own share of 50 %, i.e. EUR 5,000,000.
2. In the circumstances described in Illustration 2 under Article 1.9, where the shares are unequal, A has to finally bear 75 % of the reimbursement, and it can only recuperate the excess, i.e. B's share of EUR 2,500,000.
3. In Illustration 3 under Article 1.9, Company B's intervention as joint and several obligor was a form of suretyship, and Company A's share in 100 %. If Company B has repaid the loan to Bank W, it can claim full reimbursement from A.

The rule in Article 1.10 can also apply in more complex circumstances.

## Illustration

4. Investors A, B and C have joined efforts to buy an office building. The total price amounts to USD 1,000,000, but the respective agreed shares are 50 %, 30 % and 20 %. The seller is entitled to request payment of USD 1,000,000 from any of the obligors, but it can only recover USD 650,000 from A ; the seller then recovers the remaining USD 350,000 from B. Buyer A has paid USD 150,000 in excess of its share of USD 500,000 ; Buyer B has paid USD 50,000 in excess of its share of USD 300,000. Buyer C's share, on the other hand, is totally unpaid. A and B will respectively have contributory claims of USD 150,000 and USD 50,000 against C.

Articles 1.6 (2), 1.7 (1)(b) and 18 (b) provide for particular rules on the availability of contributory claims under the circumstances these provisions respectively govern.

*Note by the Rapporteur*

*Further to a suggestion made at Rome 2009, a cross reference to articles 1.6 (2), 1.7 (1)(b) and 18 (b) has been added to the Comments. Cf. SR 2009, Nos. 565-566.*

**Article 1.11**  
*(Rights of the obligee)*

**(1) A joint and several obligor to whom article 1.10 applies may also exercise the rights of the obligee, including all rights securing their performance, to recover the excess from all or any of the other obligors to the extent of each obligor's unperformed share.**

**(2) An obligee who has not received full performance retains its rights against the co-obligors to the extent of the unperformed part, with precedence over co-obligors exercising contributory claims.**

COMMENT

**1. Subrogation in the obligee's rights**

A co-obligor who has paid more than its share to the obligee has a contributory claim against the other obligors under Article 1.10 of these Principles. Article 1.11 (1) gives the co-obligor exercising such contributory claim the possibility of benefiting from the rights of the obligee, including **all rights securing their performance**.

Illustration

1. Bank X has loaned EUR 500,000 to Companies A and B, guaranteed by a mortgage on Company A's premises. Company B reimburses the full amount of the loan, and claims Company A's contribution of EUR 250,000. In case Company A fails to pay, Company B may avail itself of the Bank's mortgage up to the amount of its claim against Company A.

**2. Obligee's rights reserved and preferred**

The benefit given to the co-obligor does not affect the remaining rights of the obligee who has not been paid in full. The obligee retains these rights against the co-obligors to the extent of the unperformed part.

Illustration

2. The case is the same as in Illustration 1, but Company B has only reimbursed EUR 400,000 of the loan. Company B has a contributory claim against Company A for the amount in excess of its own share, i.e. EUR 150,000 (EUR 400,000 – EUR 250,000). Bank X is still entitled to claim the unpaid amount of the loan, i.e. EUR 100,000. If Bank X claims that amount from Company A, both Company B and Bank X will be able to rely on the mortgage, up to respectively EUR 150,000 and EUR 100,000.

In case concurrent claims are exercised by the obligee and a co-obligor against another co-obligor, and if the latter co-obligor proves to be partly insolvent, precedence will be given to the obligee's claim.

## Illustration

3. The case is the same as in Illustration 3, but Company A fails to pay and the value of the mortgaged premises is down to EUR 200,000. Bank X will have precedence to recover its claim of EUR 100,000, and Company B will only recuperate EUR 100,000 of its claim of EUR 150,000

This rule on precedence is subject to the possible application of mandatory rules providing otherwise in insolvency proceedings.

### *Note by the Rapporteur*

*The black letters correspond to Variant 6 proposed and adopted at Rome 2009 (SR Nos. 567-576). As suggested, the expression “accessory securities”, in par. (1), has been replaced by language inspired by article 9.1.14 (b) of these Principles (SR Nos. 569-570), which we suggest to adapt to the preceding words of the present provision by saying “all rights securing their performance”.*

*The rule on precedence, submitted between brackets at Rome 2009, was adopted as such (SR Nos. 574-576). The black letters and Comments have been adjusted accordingly. Further to discussions at Rome 2009 (SR Nos. 571-573), a paragraph has been added to the Comments about the possible interference of mandatory rules in insolvency proceedings.*

## Article 1.12

*(Defences in contributory claims)*

**A joint and several obligor against whom a claim is made by the co-obligor who has performed the obligation may raise any common defences and rights of set-off that were available to be asserted by the co-obligor against the obligee ; it may also assert defences and rights of set-off which are personal to itself, but not those which are personal to one or several of the other co-obligors.**

### COMMENT

This provision deals with the defences and rights of set-off that may be asserted between co-obligors, when contributory claims are exercised.

#### **1. Common defences and rights of set-off**

Pursuant to Article 1.4 above, the co-obligor asked to perform by the obligee may assert all defences and rights of set-off common to all the co-obligors. If that co-obligor has failed to raise such a defence or right of set-off, which would have extinguished or reduced the obligation, any other joint and several obligor against which the former obligor exercises a contributory claim may assert that defence or right of set-off.

### Illustration

1. Joint and several obligors A and B have made the same mistake when buying a know-how licence together (the technology was fit for none of them); each obligor could invoke this common mistake against Licensor X. Buyer A fails to do so when required to pay the fees by Licensor X. Buyer B may refuse to pay its contributory share to A.

## 2. Personal defences and rights of set-off

A co-obligor may also assert a defence or right of set-off personal to itself against a contributory claim.

### Illustration

2. Companies A, B and C are jointly and severally bound to pay the price of products to be purchased from Seller X, located in another country. Company A's required import licence is cancelled by authorities. Company B pays the full price to Seller X. Company A may assert its loss of licence as a personal defence against Company B's contributory claim.

But a co-obligor may not assert a defence or right of set-off personal to one or several of the other co-obligors.

### Illustration

3. The facts are the same as in Illustration 2. If Company B claims contribution against Company C, the latter may not invoke Company A's loss of licence, a defence which was personal to Company A.

### *Note by the Rapporteur*

*Further to discussions at Rome 2009 (SR 2009, Nos. 577-599), several linguistic changes have been introduced. The title of the article has become "Defences in contributory claims". In the black letters, "sued for reimbursement" has been replaced by the same language as in article 1.4, i.e. "against whom a claim is made". The expression "have not been asserted" has been replaced by "were available to be asserted". In line 4 of the black letters, we did not follow the suggestion to replace "co-obligor" by "obligor" (SR 2009, Nos. 596-597) : we felt that it would cause confusion, since the 'co-obligor' in line 4 corresponds to the "co-obligor" in line 3, and not to the "obligor" in line 1.*

### **Article 1.13**

*(Inability to recover)*

**If a joint and several obligor who has performed more than that obligor's share is unable, despite all reasonable efforts, to recover contribution from another joint and several obligor, the**

**share of the others, including the one who has performed, is increased proportionally.**

COMMENT

### **1. Proportional sharing of the loss**

It can happen that a co-obligor exercising a contributory claim against another co-obligor is unable to recover because the latter is insolvent, or its assets are out of reach, or it has disappeared. The burden of the loss is then spread among the other co-obligors.

Illustration

1. Companies A, B and C borrow EUR 6,000,000 from Bank X, their contributory shares being equal. After reimbursing the loan, Company A claims EUR 2,000,000 from Company B and EUR 2,000,000 from Company C. Company B turns out to be insolvent. The loss of EUR 2,000,000 has to be borne proportionally by the other co-obligors, including the one who has performed. Since their shares are identical, both Company A and Company C will bear an equal part of the loss, i.e. EUR 1,000,000 each. Consequently, Company A can recover EUR 3,000,000 from Company C.

### **2. All reasonable efforts**

Before invoking this rule in order to claim increased contributions from the other co-obligors, the obligor who has performed must exert all reasonable efforts to recover from the defaulting co-obligor, in the light of Article 5.1.4 (2) of these Principles.

Illustration

2. In the situation described in Illustration 1, Firm A does not question Firm B's assertion that it is unable to pay because of financial difficulties, and immediately asks for increased contributions from the other co-obligors. This is not acceptable. In order to avail itself of Article 1.13, Firm A must establish that it has exerted all reasonable efforts to recover from Firm A, such as reminders, injunctions attachments, legal proceedings, etc., as may be appropriate.

*Note by the Rapporteur*

*Neither the black letters of this provision nor the Comments were subject to any observation at Rome 2009 (SR No. 600)*

## Section 2 : Plurality of obligees

### Article 2.1 (Definitions)

**When several obligees can claim performance of the same obligation from an obligor :**

**(1) the claims are separate when each obligee can only claim its share;**

**(2) the claims are joint and several when each obligee can claim the whole performance;**

**(3) the claims are joint when all obligees have to claim performance together.**

#### COMMENT

##### 1. Several obligees

Plurality of obligees occurs in different situations.

##### Illustration

1. Banks A, B and C join in a syndicated loan agreement to lend USD 12,000,000 to Company X. The three banks are plural obligees with regard to claiming reimbursement from Company X.

Other instances of plurality of obligees occur, among others, with co-insurers, multiple buyers and/or sellers in share acquisition agreements and partners in consortium agreements in various sectors, such as construction or the petroleum industry.

##### 2. The same obligation

This Section applies when the different obligees can claim performance of the same obligation from the obligor. This was the case in Illustration 1 (reimbursement of the syndicated loan). Situations where different obligees of the same obligor have rights deriving from different obligations do not fall under the scope of this Section.

##### Illustration

2. Architect A and Contractor B are both involved in the construction of a new industrial plant. Their respective claims against the Client concern different obligations (payment of their respective types of services). They are not subject to the rules in the present Section, but to the respectively applicable legal provisions.

On the other hand, when different actors in a construction project join in a consortium and claim one payment for all their services, they are to be considered as plural obligees for that payment.

The “same obligation” usually derives from a single contract. In Illustration 1 above, the syndicated loan agreement is a single contract. But it could also happen, in the same situation, that each lender would choose to have its own contract with the borrower. Co-insurers joining to cover the same risk usually have distinct contractual relationships with the insured.

#### Illustration

3. Eight insurance companies agree to co-insure the liability risks of a pharmaceutical group. The co-insurance agreement provides that each co-insurer has a distinct contractual relationship with the insured, but the latter’s obligations towards the co-insurers are the same (payment of the agreed premium, required prevention measures, loss notification, etc...). These co-insurers are plural obligees, subject as such to the rules in this Section.

### 3. Three main types

Article 2.1 defines three main types of claims appearing in practice when several obligees can claim performance of the same obligation from an obligor.

The claims can be separate. Each obligee can then only claim its share, which will be presumed to be the case (see below, article 2.2).

#### Illustration

4. The facts are the same as in Illustration 1. If Banks A, B and C’s claims against Company X, totalling USD 12,000,000, are separate and if their shares are equal, each bank may only claim reimbursement of USD 4,000,000 from Company X.

The claims can be joint and several, which means that each obligee can claim full performance (see below, article 2.3), subject to subsequent allocation between the different obligees (see below, article 2.5).

#### Illustration

5. Companies A and B are co-owners of a storage house, which they rent to transport Company X. The contract provides that the co-owners’ claims concerning the rent are joint and several. Company A and Company B may each claim payment of the full amount of the rent from Company X.

The claims are “joint” when all obligees have then to claim together; consequently, the obligor may only perform in favour of all of them together. This situation is sometimes also referred to as “communal claims”.

#### Illustration

6. Companies A and B rent an office together, to share in a foreign capital. Due to the nature of their claim on occupation of the office, they can be considered as joint obligees. This would not prevent them from designating one of them as agent for dealings with the owner of the premises.



*Note by the Rapporteur*

*The Comments have taken into consideration several suggestions made at Rome 2009 (SR 2009 Nos. 603-610).*

## **Article 2.2**

*(Presumption of joint and several claims)*

**When several obligees can claim performance of the same obligation from the same obligor, they are presumed to have joint and several claims, unless the circumstances indicate otherwise.**

COMMENT

### **1. Presumption : joint and several claims**

When an obligor owes performance of the same obligation to several obligees, it is presumed that the claims are joint and several.

Such a presumption appears to be the most adequate for claims to services, where the obligations are often indivisible. More generally, it has the advantages to avoid the multiplication of law suits, an especially important concern in international trade. It also simplifies the situation of the obligor, who will not have to divide performance between its different obligees.

From the point of view of the plural obligees themselves, claims are also made easier if they are joint and several. On the other hand, whenever plural obligees might prefer to keep exclusive control on their respective claims, they are most of the time in a good position to reverse the presumption by stipulating separate claims, if circumstances do not already indicate otherwise.

#### Illustrations

1. Tax consultant X has undertaken to give tax advice to Companies A and B, concerning the operations of a joint venture in which the latter are involved. Companies A and B are presumed to be joint and several obligees when claiming performance from Tax consultant X.
2. Art collectors A and B, co-owners of a painting by Rothko, sell it to a Museum for a price of USD 20,000,000. It is presumed that each seller can claim payment of the whole price, subject to the subsequent obligation, under art. 2.5 below, to transfer the due share to the other obligee.
3. Importer X purchases 200 trucks from a foreign manufacturer. Since at the moment such a quantity is not available at any single plant, 100 trucks will be delivered from

Subsidiary Company A, 60 from Subsidiary Company B and 40 from Subsidiary Company C. Concerning payment of the price, these three subsidiaries are presumed to be joint and several obligees. One consequence is that under article 2.3 (2) below, Importer X will be discharged by a single payment of the global price in favour of one of the three Subsidiaries.

## 2. Circumstances indicating otherwise

However, circumstances can indicate otherwise.

First of all, the obligees may have contractually agreed that their claims would not be joint and several, but separate.

### Illustrations

4. Banks A, B and C join in a syndicated loan agreement to offer financing to Company X. Typically for such operations, the agreement provides that *"All amounts due, and obligations owed, to each Bank are separate and independent obligations. Each Bank may separately enforce its rights under this agreement"*.

5. The facts are the same as in Illustration 2, but there is an explicit clause in the sales contract with the Museum stating that A and B's claims are separate. This means each of them can only claim payment of the price for its previous share of ownership.

Other circumstances can also cause deviation from the presumption of joint and several claims.

### Illustration

6. Company A, located in Japan, and Company B, located in China, join in ordering a large quantity of cars from a manufacturer. The cars for Japan are right hand-drive, those for China left hand-drive. When delivery is to be claimed, circumstances indicate that Companies A and B are not joint and several obligees, but separate, each one being entitled to claim its variety of cars.

## 3. Possible designation of an agent

The fact that the claims are sometimes separate does not prevent the obligees to designate an agent with authority to deal with the obligor on behalf of all of them, within the agreed limits. This seems to be frequent, for practical reasons. Each obligee, however, intends to keep full control of its own rights, often reserving the possibility to revoke the agent's authority at any time.

### Illustration

7. Banks A, B and C have joined in a syndicated loan agreement to lend USD 12,000,000 to Company X. The claims are separate, USD 4,000,000 for each bank. However, Bank A has been designated as agent of the consortium, with authority to collect reimbursement of the full amount.

*Note by the Rapporteur*

*After more extensive discussions at Rome 2009, where many different views were expressed (SR 2009, Nos. 611-644), it was agreed to have a presumption in favour of joint and several claims (No. 646). Consequently the black letters have been modified and the Comments rewritten. Some Illustrations have been redrafted, some are new.*

**Article 2.3**

*(Effects of joint and several claims )*

**(1) Any of the joint and several obligees can claim the whole performance from the obligor.**

**(2) Performance of an obligation in favour of one of the joint and several obligees discharges the obligor towards the other obligees.**

## COMMENT

**1. Each obligee can claim full performance**

When claims are joint and several, each obligee is entitled to claim full performance from the obligor.

## Illustration

1. Co-owners A and B have sold their hotel to Buyer X for a price of EUR 5,000,000. Their shares of co-ownership were equal. The sales contract provides that the sellers' claims concerning payment of the price are joint and several. Seller A may claim EUR 5,000,000 from Buyer X, subject to further allocation under Article 2.5 below.

**2. Obligor's choice**

If the obligor takes the initiative to spontaneously perform its obligation, it is entitled to render performance in favour of any of its obligees.

## Illustration

2. Buyer X takes the initiative of paying the price before being invited to do so by either of its obligees. Buyer X may validly pay to Seller A or to Seller B.

**3. Obligor's discharge**

The obligor who has rendered full performance in favour of one of the obligees is discharged towards the other obligees.

### Illustration

3. Buyer X has paid the whole price of EUR 5,000,000 to Seller A. Seller B, having difficulties to recover its share from Seller A, requires payment of EUR 2,500,000 from Buyer X. Under Article 2.3 (2), the claim will be rejected since full payment to Seller A has discharged Buyer X towards the other obligee.

## 4. Practical aspects

The right given to each of the joint of several obligees to claim full performance may call for some coordination, to avoid duplication of initiatives and unnecessary costs. Either the obligees have agreed in advance on which of them will claim performance, or at least the obligee envisaging to take the initiative should consult with its co-obligees.

On the other hand, when the obligor takes the initiative, its choice of the obligee to whom it will perform may be affected by the fact that another obligee is already requesting performance. Some prior consulting may then be appropriate. Also, an obligee who has received payment should immediately inform the others that performance has been rendered.

Such solutions could usefully be agreed in advance by all parties involved. Otherwise the requirements of good faith are always applicable (Article 1.7).

### *Note by the Rapporteur*

*Further to the discussions at Rome 2009 (SR Nos. 648-656), a few linguistic amendments have been brought to the Comments. On the other hand, it was felt that the point discussed at Nos. 651-654 was already adequately met in Comment No. 4.*

### **Article 2.4**

*(Availability of defences against joint and several obligees)*

**(1) The obligor may assert against any of the joint and several obligees all the defences and rights of set-off that are personal to its relationship to that obligee or that it can assert against all the co-obligees, but may not assert defences and rights of set-off that are personal to its relationship to one or several of the other co-obligees.**

**(2) The rules of articles 1.5, 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8 apply, with appropriate adaptations, to joint and several claims.**

### COMMENT

#### **1. Availability of defences**

The defences which may entitle the obligor to refuse to perform do not necessarily exist against all obligees. Some of them may be personal to the obligor's relationship

with one obligee only. Such defences can be asserted against the concerned obligee only.

#### Illustration

1. Grain producer X has agreed to supply a certain quantity of wheat to Companies A, B and C, who are engaged into a common agricultural project in a developing country. The contract provides that Companies A, B and C are joint and several obligees as concerns the deliveries. Producer X discovers that Company A is controlled by some of its former employees; if it had known that circumstance Producer X would not have contracted with Company A. Producer X may invoke this mistake under Article 3.5 against Company A requiring delivery, but not against Companies B and C.

The obligor may also assert defences that it has in common against all obligees.

#### Illustrations

2. The initial facts are the same as in Illustration 1. Grain producer X finds out that the agricultural project involves massive use of child labour by Companies A, B and C, in violation of applicable mandatory rules, making the contract subject to Article ... This is a common defence that Producer X may assert against any obligee claiming delivery of the wheat.

3. The initial facts are again the same as in Illustration 1. Producer X, however, takes the initiative to send a notice of avoidance to Company A, under article 3.14, leading to partial avoidance of the contract under article 3.16. Such partial avoidance, when effective, can then be asserted against Companies B and C, since it affects the contract in itself and has become a common defence.

## 2. Effects of certain defences

Section 1 of the present Chapter contained particular rules about the effects of certain types of defences (Articles 1.5, 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8). Paragraph 3 of this Article provides that these rules apply, with appropriate adaptations, to joint and several claims. Some examples will be given.

- Performance, set-off (art. 2.4, 2° referring to art. 1.5)

#### Illustrations

4. Companies A, B and C have jointly and severally loaned EUR 300,000 to Borrower X. Company A receives full payment. In case Company B or C would still endeavour to claim reimbursement, Borrower X may assert that it has fully performed in the hands of Company A.

5. The same loan has taken place, but in a different context, Borrower X can claim EUR 300,000 from Company A for the sale of office equipment. Borrower X exercises set-off under Article 8.3. Its obligation under the loan agreement is extinguished not only towards Company A but also towards Companies B and C.

- Release (art. 2.4, 2° referring to art. 1.6)

Illustration

6. Pamela, a famous racing horse, has been sold by its co-owners A and B to Buyer X. Concerning payment of the price, the contract provides that A and B are joint and several obligees. If Co-owner A releases Buyer X of its obligation, Co-owner B's claim against Buyer X is reduced by the amount of releasing Co-owner A's share. Co-owner A has no contributory recourse against Co-owner B under article 2.5 below.

- Settlement (art. 2.4, 2° referring to art. 1.6)

Illustration

7. In the same situation as in Illustration 3, Company A, whose share in the loan is EUR 100,000, settles with Borrower X, accepting a payment of EUR 60,000, i.e. an amount below its share. Co-obligees B and C's joint and several claim against X is reduced by the full amount of A's share, i.e. by EUR 100,000, and they remain Borrower X's joint and several obligees for EUR 200,000. Settling obligee A has no more recourse under article 2.5 against Companies B or C (comp. art. 1.6, 2°).

As in Article 1.6, *mutatis mutandis*, this concerns the special case where a separate settlement intervenes between the obligor and one of the joint and several obligees, for the latter's share. Then the issue to be solved is that of the consequences of such settlement on the other obligees' claims.

In the more frequent situation where the settlement concerns the whole joint and several claims, the consequences on the different obligees' claims will be determined by the terms of the settlement agreed by all parties, and the contributory claims will be adjusted accordingly.

- Limitation (art. 2.4, 2° referring to art. 1.7)

Illustration

8. Obligor X has three joint and several obligees, A, B and C. Co-obligee A's claim against obligor X is time-barred. This does not affect co-obligees B and C's claims against X. If B or C receives performance from X, A can claim its share from the co-obligee having received payment.

- Effect of judgment (art. 2.4, 2° referring to art. 1.8)

Illustrations

9. Obligor X has three joint and several obligees, A, B and C. Obligee A acting alone sues Obligor X for performance; the judgement grants Obligee A only part of its claim. Such judgment does not affect the obligations of Obligor X towards co-obligees B or C, nor the recourses between co-obligees under article 2.5.

10. The initial facts are the same as in Illustration 9. This time, however, the judgment gives full satisfaction to Obligee A, including the award of additional damages. The other obligees may avail themselves of this favourable decision.

*Note by the Rapporteur*

*According to suggestions made at Rome 2009 (SR 2009, Nos. 657-663), the title has been amended and a few linguistic changes brought to the Comments. In Illustration 2, the term “illegal” has for the time being been replaced by a formula (“in violation of applicable mandatory rules, making the contract subject to Article ...”), to be revisited when the language in the chapter on “illegality” will be finalised. Illustration 3 is new ; it is submitted as a tentative answer to a question raised at Rome 2009 (SR No. 659-660). Illustration 10 has been added to reflect the proposed addition to article 1.8.*

**Article 2.5**

*(Allocation between joint and several obligees)*

**(1) As between themselves, joint and several obligees are entitled to equal shares, unless the circumstances indicate otherwise.**

**(2) An obligee who has received more than its share must transfer the excess to the other obligees to the extent of their respective shares.**

COMMENT

**1. Presumption of equal shares**

Joint and several obligees may each claim full performance of the whole obligation under Article 2.3. However, as between themselves, they are only entitled to their respective shares. Such shares are presumed to be equal.

Illustration

1. Co-owners A and B have sold their house for SFR 1,000,000, and they are joint and several obligees concerning payment of the price. However, once the buyer has paid SFR 1,000,000, each co-owner will be entitled to receive its share in the final allocation. In principle, the shares are considered to be equal. Each co-owner should receive SFR 500,000.

However, the circumstances may indicate otherwise.

#### Illustration

2. The shares of co-ownership of the house were not equal, but 75 % for A and 25 % for B. This will indicate that Seller A should receive SFR 750,000 and Seller B SFR 250,000.

### **2. Transfer of excess received**

It will usually happen that the co-obligee claiming payment receives more than its share, since it is entitled to claim full performance under Article 2.3. When an obligee has received more than its share, it must transfer the excess to the other obligees to the extent of their respective shares.

#### Illustration

3. Seller A has been paid the full price of the house, i.e. SFR 1,000,000, and its share of co-ownership was 50 %. Seller A must transfer SFR 500,000 to Seller B.

#### *Note by the Rapporteur*

*See SR 2009, Nos. 664-666. The suggestions made at No. 665 have been taken into consideration.*