

The President's Message

The 19th Annual Conference of the IPBA was held in Manila from April 29 to May 2, 2009, at Sofitel Philippine Plaza. Despite the global economic downturn, the Conference attracted a large number of attendees both locally and internationally, and proved to be one of the most successful annual conferences of the IPBA.

The Opening Ceremony at the Philippine International Convention Center featured the keynote speech of the President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who later graciously joined the Officers and Past Presidents of the IPBA for snack and group photo to boot.

The Plenary Session highlighted recent developments in commercial law reform in the Pacific region. This was presented by Paul Holden of the Enterprise Research Institute, Gordon R. Walker of La Trobe University Law School, and Terry Reid of the Pacific Liaison and Coordination Office in Sydney of the Asian Development Bank.

Around the theme *Legal Practice: Coping with Diversity and Change*, the Manila Conference offered 35 concurrent educational programs organized by IPBA Committees. These included a program on the latest developments in anti-corruption laws in Asia, which was presented by the IPBA Legal Practice Committee in association with LAWASIA, as well as a session on antitrust law enforcement in the Asia-Pacific by the IPBA Competition Law Committee and the ABA Section of Antitrust Law. In turn, the Dispute Resolution and Arbitration Committee had a joint program with INTA on the recent innovations in resolving intellectual property and information technology disputes. These and the other educational programs were well attended.

The attendees found the social events particularly enjoyable and memorable. The band called *Spirit of '67* performed at the welcome reception at the Sofitel Plaza Ballroom, and the many attendees danced the night away. There were more dancing at the gala the following night at *SMX Convention Center*, with *Rockin Revival* playing, after the performance of the sultry singer *Verni Varga*. The farewell reception on the third night was held at *One Esplanade*. This time it was the turn of the *Bayanihan Dance Troup* to showcase local folk dances that won them awards internationally.

For the successful conference, thanks go to the Manila Host Committee and the law firms concerned (namely, SyCip Salazar Hernandez & Gatmaitan, Angara Abello Concepcion Regala & Cruz, Castillo Laman Tan Pantaleon & San Jose, Cochingyan & Peralta Law Offices, Del Rosario Bagamasbad & Raboca, Del Rosario & Del Rosario, Jimenez Gonzales Bello Valdez Caluya & Fernandez, Romulo Mabanta Buenaventura Sayoc & de los Angeles, and Villaraza Marcelo Cruz & Angangco). The webmaster, Valeriano R. del Rosario, should be commended for the conference website. The Event Organizer (Baron Travel Corporation) and the Event Consultant (Nadja A. Trinchera) deserve a lot of credit for the organization and conduct of the conference.

This year, there were five IPBA scholars (one each from Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Myanmar, and two from the Philippines).

With the Manila Conference over, we must now focus our attention on the Singapore Conference from May 2 to 5 next year. Preparations are already underway for this conference under the able leadership of Suet-Fern Lee, the IPBA President-Elect. The theme of the Singapore Conference is *Climate Change* and the organizers have invited former U.S. Vice President Al Gore to be a keynote speaker.

The IPBA has been pursuing its goal of strengthening the Asia-Pacific legal community by contributing to the development of the law through, among others, its annual conferences. I encourage and invite everyone to support the Singapore Conference next year. Let us mark May 2 - 5, 2010 in our calendar and make sure to attend the Singapore Conference.

Rafael A. Morales
President