

IPBA Conference Report
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Attending the 25th Annual IPBA Conference was for me a truly eye-opening experience. The conference's theme, "Vision for the Future – the Playing Field," could not be more relevant today where the practice of law has become more global as clients expand beyond their domestic markets to establish their presence overseas. Globalization and the effects of the last recession pose unique challenges and opportunities for the legal profession, a recurring theme throughout the various committee sessions held from May 7 to May 9.

On the first day of the conference, my fellow scholars and I were brought to the Hong Kong High Court by Ms. Rachel So of the Law Society of Hong Kong and Mr. Tatsuki Nakayama (now co-chair of the IPBA Scholarship Committee) for a tour of the building and to observe the on-going proceedings. I witnessed the arraignment of a foreign national accused of drug possession and the giving by the judge of jury instructions to jurors in another drug case. It was interesting to note that the proceedings in the Hong Kong High Court still retained some of the elements of the UK legal system, including the split roles of barristers and solicitors, the donning of gowns and wigs, and the jury system.

After spending the morning at the Hong Kong High Court, I, together with the other scholars, were brought to the head office of Deacons in Central where we were given a tour of the office and treated to a light lunch with some of their lawyers.

Thereafter, the scholars took the bus to the Hong Kong Convention Center where we met Mr. Amit Acco, the chairman of the IPBA Scholarship Committee to discuss the flow of the presentation the scholars were expected to give during the May 8 scholars' committee session titled "Bar Programme's and Law Firms' Contributions and Commitment to Young Lawyers' Careers." Listening to the other scholars' insights and experiences made me realize that many of the concerns young lawyers face today are universal, and that law firms and the local bar association have important roles to play in the career development of young lawyers. After the discussion, I moved to another room to attend the Women Business Lawyers Reception and the IPBA Scholars / New Members Reception followed by the Welcome Reception at the Happy Valley Racecourse.

The next morning, I attended Plenary Sessions 1 and 2. It was interesting to hear the views of the panel regarding the trends and challenges faced by law firms in Asia and how law firms ought to meet these challenges in order to continue to provide bespoke and seamless services to clients. In the afternoon, I attended the session on "E-Commerce and Crypto-Currency." This session focused on the emergence of crypto-currencies such as the bit-coin, and tackled thought-provoking issues on whether crypto-currencies are actually legal tender and whether they operate in or out of the current regulatory framework. I also attended the M&A auctions session which I found quite useful and insightful, having participated in several transactions involving auctions.

I thoroughly enjoyed the Friday committee morning sessions on bilateral investment treaties (BITs) and investor protection. Hearing the experts talk about their respective countries' stance on the proliferation of BITs and whether they actually protect investors at the expense of the host state was quite enlightening.

The scholars' committee session took place on Friday afternoon. This was, for me, the highlight of the conference. I was fortunate to be among those chosen to participate in the panel. While sitting on the panel, I answered questions interposed by Mr. Acco in connection with the

contributions of the Philippine bar association and law firms to the careers of young lawyers and shared my personal observations regarding promotion and career advancement in law firms. I also responded to questions raised by the audience during the session.

After the scholars' committee session, I attended the corporate governance session held in the main theater. Upon realizing that there was concurrently another session sponsored by the Women Business Lawyers committee, I decided to cut short my attendance in the corporate governance session and attended the last half of the session titled "How We Can Use Law to Change the Future for Women in Law." It was inspiring to hear these women trade stories about how they manage to juggle their family responsibilities with their careers.

The gala dinner on Friday evening was quite nice. It gave me the chance to chat with the other scholars and members of the IPBA Scholarship Committee and get to know them better. I spent Saturday morning attending the last few sessions and managed to make it to the Debevoise & Plimpton reception in the afternoon.

All in all, the conference was a success. It was nothing short of transformative. I am grateful to the organizers, especially the Scholarship Committee, for giving me the opportunity to attend an international conference and to connect and exchange ideas with like-minded people. I see great things for the future of the IPBA and hope to be able to contribute to the organization in my own way.