

Inter-Pacific Bar Association 23rd Annual Meeting and Conference 17-20 April 2013, Seoul, Korea

Conference Attendance Report

By Tin Thiri Aung, IPBA Myanmar Scholar

Prior to my arrival in Seoul, I had noticed that the Scholars profiles were published on the IPBA website as well as the program guide. After seeing my profile alongside fellow scholars, I was very honored to be selected as a scholar for this year IPBA conference.

17 April 2013

As I arrived in Seoul only on 17th morning, I was unable to join the scholars visit led by James Jung to the court and lunch with the lawyers and judges. I was told that the excursion was insightful.

After resting for a while at my accommodation, I made my way to the registration booth and received the conference materials for review. At 2 P.M I attended the scholar's orientation with fellow scholars and was introduced to the scholarship committee and responsible persons from the IPBA secretariat. After the introduction, each scholar had to give their 5 minute presentation on the topic "A Cultural Exchange with IPBA Scholar and Friends: Business Etiquette in a Dynamic World " as a practice round. After each scholar gave their presentation, they were given a feedback by Amit Acco, Tatsuki Nakayama and Varya Simpson on how to improve their presentations for the actual day. After the orientation session ended, we were presented with a gift each from Thai Trung Kien as a memento.

Next up in our agenda was to attend a reception for New Members and IPBA scholars. Since the turnout for the reception was not much as expected, the organizers combined it with Woman Business Lawyers reception. As a woman lawyer myself, it was inspiring to meet with successful ladies of the same profession. During the reception, all of the scholars were called upon individually by the President, Mr. Lait Bashin and given a certificate of attendance and had to introduce ourselves to the audience.

At the end of the New Members and IPBA scholars reception, we made our way to the Welcome reception. It was a very informal event with live entertainment and delicious food and beverages on offer. All the delegates were welcomed by the AIPA president Mr. Bashin and the president of the host committee Mr. Young-Moo Shin. During the reception, we were presented with a video of the Host committee and the IPBA officers doing the Gangnam Style parody dance aptly titled "Lawyer Style". For a new member like myself, I realized that the Association is not only about enriching oneself with the region's legal practices and networking with attendees, but also having a good sense of humor and a sense of fun. In a short period of half a day, I managed to meet like-minded individuals amongst my fellow scholars, inspiring woman lawyers, lawyers from around the globe who are passionate about their work and IPBA officers who are dedicated in helping the organization grow.

18 April 2013

The opening ceremony was kicked off at 9 AM with a keynote speech from the President Lait Bashin and his speech gave me an insight on current activities and developments within the IPBA as well as around the globe.

The next session on my agenda was the topic "Hear from the CEOs". Prior to the session, I managed to meet a lawyer from Singapore whom I had worked with before and we caught up on recent developments in my country. "Hear from the CEOs" session was an eye opener for me as I had the opportunity to hear the Global business leaders discuss about the present situation of Asian business markets and their future perspectives. Dr. Chang- Gyu Hwang's presentation in particular was very educational towards the world of Information Technology.

In between sessions, during lunch, I made several acquaintances with lawyers from around the region, particularly with lawyers from the host country. Most of the lawyers I came across practice M&A, Arbitration and Corporate laws. Being a lawyer from a developing country and not having access to these laws, I was very interested in such practices so I was very curious towards learning more about them and they were very obliging in answering my queries.

When the afternoon sessions commenced, I took part in APEC's special committee's session, "Coordination of APEC and IPBA: Cross border activities of Small and Medium enterprise and venture business". Dr. Winmokan Kosumas presentation of how Thailand's SME conduct their business and their plans to expand and invest Overseas including Vietnam and Myanmar was an insightful look at how the neighboring countries handle cross-border laws, funding and risk management are assessed and handled by an in-house counsel. The other speakers from APEC, Japan, Korea and Thailand were also engaging in their own right.

After each session, I would make a point to meet up with other scholars and share experiences. I did not partake in the evening's social function, Dramia. Instead, I took a shuttle to downtown Seoul's Myeong Dong district to experience the sights, sounds, local cuisine and shopping.

19th April 2013

The breakfast hour was spent with fellow scholars Thai Trung Kein and Rojina Thalpa and each of us were comparing legal system and practices of our own country and sharing experiences on the conference so far.

The morning session I attended was "National Courts: Current and Future Trends". The most enlightening topic of that session was subrogation.

During the lunch break, I was fortunate enough to be seated with the Chair of Legal Practice Division, Mr. Michael Greene from International Bar Association and we had a very engaging conversation about our respective countries, Ireland and Myanmar's legal outlook and lawyer population of both countries. In normal circumstances, I would not have had the opportunity to meet people from high levels of prestigious organizations and I am thankful that I had a chance to do so.

The afternoon's session I attended was "What Women need to know about Social Media" given by the Women's Business Lawyer's Committee. The session shed light on how social media affects the work

place and how one can take measures on privacy settings, and how LinkedIn can be used as a tool to establish contacts and widen your reach worldwide.

The evening's social activities, the Gala Dinner and the Young Lawyers night, were full of energy and excitement. The K Pop stars performance along with a delectable dinner and being surrounded by fellow lawyers from various practices around the globe during the gala dinner, slowly made me have a sense of belonging to the association. The Young Lawyers night event at the Epic Lounge in Gangnam district was a chance to see how fellow young lawyers relax and enjoy themselves in a western style environment.

20th April 2013

This day was very thrilling for me as it was my very first public speaking opportunity with international audience to present my topic. Before our session commenced, I attended the "IP/IT challenges in the Business Landscape" as it was a topic that relates to my practice and I wanted to know how the rest of the world handle Intellectual Property and Information Technology matters in their respective countries. The moderator Mr. Juan Martinez approach made sure that all speakers presented their own perspective of their country's situation as well as requested input from audience as well.

Prior to the scholar's presentation, I made a final practice round to myself and made amendments to the script. All ten of us scholars were eager to give our own version of how to approach/ conduct formalities of each country's business etiquette. Joseph Kim also participated in presenting the business etiquette culture of the host country.

The presentation itself had a good solid turnout from various committee members from IPBA as well as other delegates and it was reassuring to see Amit Acco and Tatsuki Nakayama in the crowd lending us scholars a full support. Ms. Varya Simpson began with the introduction to the topic and introduced us to the audience. As each of the scholars gave their presentation, I realized that while some cultures are towards the western way of conducting Business, countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, China, Nepal and Myanmar are still very conservative and have their own set of etiquettes and culture to observe. After our presentation, they were a lot of interests from the audience regarding similar practices of showing appreciation in Business and legal environment in Myanmar and Russia and both myself and Darya Shakittina had an interactive Q&A with Mr. Leopoldo Pagotto from Brazil. He even followed us to the lunch session and dined with us as he was consumed with the concept of "Tea Money". After the session ended, the scholars exchanged gifts from their own countries as a kind gesture and it had a sense of kin-ship.

During lunch, all of us scholars were seated together and shared further exciting experience of the whole conference. After lunch and before the Annual General Meeting commenced, the scholars and the members from the Scholarship committee took pictures at the podium. During the AGM session, we were once again praised by Mr. Lait Bashin on our participation and wished us on future success. As a new member, AGM was informative towards the association's current activities, sponsorship and what I can benefit as a member.

In a nutshell, I discovered that the entire conference team contributed towards the event in making it a success.

All my concerns as a junior lawyer from a least developed country were significantly reduced due to the warm Korean hospitality throughout the conference. The topics were not only interesting but also valuable. Friendships were formed among the scholars and we all intend to keep in touch in the future.

Exposure to different cultures, entertainment and lifestyles has been fun and memorable. The highlight of the conference was having given a chance to talk about my own legal system and culture, sharing with others. The overall experience was confidence buildup for me.

I shall definitely continue my membership in the coming years and will look forward to the upcoming IPBA conference in Vancouver next year.