

IPBA CONFERENCE REPORT 2018

To say that attending IPBA conference is rewarding would be an understatement. Six months before the conference took place, I have never even heard about IPBA. Partners and colleagues at my firm may have mentioned and attended their events before, but I never paid too much attention to it. I always thought it was one of those events only management or partner level will and should attend. I was wrong.

When I was informed of the scholarship program, I did some research and it piqued my interest. I envisioned that the conference must be very interesting and beneficial for my career. I quickly jumped at the chance and was fortunate enough to be chosen as one of the IBPA Scholars for the IPBA 28th Annual Meeting and Conference in Manila, the Philippines.

Joining the conference is already great, but joining as a scholar is even better! Everything was pre-arranged and well-executed according to the plan. We arrived the day before the conference and had some free time to explore and familiarize ourselves with the city. The next morning we met up with the IPBA Scholarship Committee and Manila Host Committee and were taken to visit the Regional Trial Court in Makati City. We had a rare opportunity to speak with the judges of the Regional Court, about the legal system and case trial procedures in the Philippines. We really appreciated that the judges took their precious time to discuss with us. Then, we visited Romulo Mabanta Buenaventura Sayoc & De Los Angeles, one of the most prestigious law firms in Manila. Needless to say, it was another extraordinary occasion for us to learn about law firms and their work life in the Philippines. Sheryl, the lovely lawyer who was taking us to the court and the law firm, took us to lunch at her usual spot for business lunch with client and we really had a lovely time there.

After that the actual event began. We attended the welcoming ceremony, the Scholars Reception where each of us made a small speech to introduce ourselves, then the Welcome Reception. I must admit, we felt really special having people approaching us and opening conversation with us since they knew we were the scholars. Personally, I sometimes have a hard time initiating conversations with strangers so it was something that I am completely grateful for.

The next morning was all about business with several sessions on the schedule. I chose to participate in the Training and Mentoring Junior Lawyers in the Legal Profession session, Renewable Energy Trends to Watch session, Bridging Gaps in M&A Transactions and Survey

of the Rules on Cross Border Legal Practice session. They were all very informative, especially the survey on legal practice in other countries. Since in Thailand, lawyers or other legal professions are reserved for Thai nationals only, I was surprised that many countries are very open for legal practice by foreigners. The session on M&A is definitely the most useful as it is in line with my main practice. Most of our M&A transactions are multinational and we work closely with foreign firms and clients. Therefore, it was especially beneficial to learn about cultural differences among our clients and colleagues. The busy day ended with a glamorous gala dinner with the Night of Jazz theme, plus a truly unforgettable after party. It was at the after party where everyone genuinely connected, and you are guaranteed to bring home friends that will last beyond the conference days.

On the last day, we continued to attend legal and business sessions. However, in the afternoon I also attended the Annual General Meeting. Here I got to understand more about IPBA as the organization and the way it is moving towards in the future. I felt very privileged to be part of the association and hope to contribute more to it in the coming days. The last episode of the conference was the farewell party. The Rock Pop Sizzle theme got everyone moving on the dance floor. By word of mouth, we were told that there will be an after party at a nearby club. Although I was absolutely shattered from all the late nights, early mornings and back-to-back sessions, I made an effort to join and I was not disappointed.

Since the first day, all you ever heard was people talking about how intimate this conference is, comparing to other similar conferences, and how amazing it is to see familiar faces and have a chance to catch up with your old friends again. I did not understand it at the beginning because it was my first time attending, and I did not know anyone. However, now that I have made so many new friends, both from the group of Scholars and other participants I met during the 3-day event, it became clear and I finally grasped what they were talking about. I really hope I can join another IPBA event and see those familiar faces again.

I came to Manila without any expectation for the conference whatsoever. I was even afraid it would be somewhat boring. I was again wrong. It had exceeded everything I imagined it would be. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience and the opportunity to meet with other members of the law community. I would like to thank everybody from IPBA Scholarship Committee, the IPBA Secretariat team and the wonderful staff who assisted us from the beginning to the end. I can speak for everyone that we have an enriched and delightful time at the IPBA conference in Manila. As they say, it's more fun in the Philippines!