

IPBA Dubai 2023 – Conference report

I attended the IPBA Annual Meeting and Conference in Dubai on 7-10 March 2023 as an IPBA Scholar. I am very grateful for this scholarship, and I set out below my report of this wonderful experience. I also wish to record my deep thanks at the outset to Ms Randa Morioka, Mr Mahesh Rai, and Ms Sophia Lin who worked so hard in their running of the Scholarship programme.

On the first day, the Scholars had the opportunity to attend a number of events to learn more about the UAE and its unique legal offering. We attended the eminent UAE law firms Hadeef & Partners and Al Tamimi & Company where we learnt about UAE history, the UAE legal system, and its pioneering adoption of various innovations in the law (such as the use of artificial intelligence, the unique institution of the DIFC, and the like). We also had the privilege of attending the DIFC Courts for a candid ‘Chatham House’ conversation with His Excellency Justice Ali Al Mandhani. Later in the day, there was a reception held at the Conference venue where we could mingle with the other delegates.

On the second day, the formal opening of the Conference was a highlight, with the keynote speakers sharing their insights regarding a range of important topics from the effect of Covid on the global dispute resolution scene, to the IPBA’s work past and present, to the UAE’s role in spearheading legal innovations. Following that, for the rest of the Conference, the Scholars could choose which plenary sessions to attend to further their interests.

The breadth and depth of the sessions was impressive. I attended sessions discussing topics from legal challenges in procurement contracts to cross-border insolvency to ESG and strategic litigation. Each and every session was remarkable in the speakers’ insight, the diversity (in the broadest sense), and where time permitted the thoughtfulness of the questions from the floor. It was most enjoyable attending these sessions.

There were also fantastic opportunities to mingle with the delegates and meet friends old and new in a professional and relaxed setting. Beyond the coffee breaks, there was a plethora of social events such as the Gala dinner, the Farewell dinner, and a variety of receptions.

In reflecting on my experience, I was struck by how quickly the time passed and how much I enjoyed every minute of it. It is the members who make the IPBA special (not least the Scholars who have formed a special bond and a very active WhatsApp group). The opportunity to attend the conference in person, partake in all the events, and meet members was a privilege. I very much hope to continue my full participation with the IPBA moving forward and to play an active role in it.

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