

IBA President's report on 2017 Activities

As I enter into my first year as President of the International Bar Association (IBA), I am delighted to share with you some highlights of our plans for 2017.

This year the IBA celebrates its 70th anniversary and we are thrilled to be hosting our Annual Conference taking place from 8-13 October in the truly global atmosphere of Sydney, Australia. As always, the conference will be a platform for discussion of issues relevant to all Bars, including several exciting sessions planned by the IBA's Bar Issues Commission.

During my term as IBA President, I want to emphasize to our members and to the legal profession worldwide that lawyers must explain to the general public the importance of maintaining rule of law and human rights. It is important that these valuable principles are upheld and defended, particularly in these times of increasing divisiveness that we are witnessing in the growing populist movements around the world. The IBA will be active in these debates, and in the creation of solutions, always championing the cause of justice and the rule of law at the heart of them.

In addition to carrying on the great work of my predecessor, I have established several new priorities which will be the focus of my tenure as President.

- **The Future of Legal Services**
A Task Force will be established to address anticipated dramatic changes in the manner in which legal services are provided (eg due to use of artificial intelligence and the impact new technologies will have on client needs and behaviour). The Task Force will explore steps to be taken by the regulators, law firms in order to prepare for such changes. I plan to encourage the participation of all the IBA entities in exploring and addressing these challenges and to compile resources to be made available to IBA members to assist them in facing the issues that will define our profession moving forward.
- **The Role of Lawyers in Transactions involving Offshore Structures**
Following on from the London Anti-Corruption Summit which took place in May 2016, the IBA and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have agreed to form a task force to develop professional conduct standards and practice guidance for lawyers involved in establishing and advising on offshore structures and recommended actions for governments. The principle motivation for forming the OECD-IBA Task Force on The Role of Lawyers and International Commercial Structures is to create a key component in the global fight against white-collar crime involving offshore entities. The Task Force will work to develop appropriate guidance with respect to forming and using offshore structures, while ensuring that both confidence in the lawyers' role and the core principles of the legal profession are preserved.
- **Cybersecurity**
Security of data is a growing issue of concern to law firms and their clients, and is becoming a more significant issue in the management of a practice. Hacking and cyber-criminality are reaching new levels of activity and sophistication, and network security is only as strong as its weakest link. The evidence from such attacks is that law firms and individual lawyers must implement high standards not only for the deployment of technology but also for the organisational processes by which they run their businesses. I will establish a Task Force to produce a set of recommended minimum professional standards and guidelines, applicable to any practitioner worldwide, which can be followed to help protect from breaches of data security, give clients the best possible assurances, and thereby to help protect the reputation of the profession.

- **Digital Hub**
The IBA will continue to develop a new line of its operations enabling those who cannot attend events in person to participate online in the life of the Association. At the same time, the IBA will carry on expanding its offering of multimedia content, serving both its membership and the general public around the world.
- **Rule of Law Presentation and Booklet**
The IBA will develop a presentation tool available to lawyers, which will explain to lay audiences the reasons for and the principles of the Rule of Law. There will also be a booklet created with the purpose to outline a basic training for those individual who presenting with this tool, which will assist them in answering frequently asked questions.

I also want to bring to your attention some key projects undertaken by IBA committees which I believe will be of interest to your organisations.

- The IBAHRI's UN Programme, based in Geneva, continues to grow. As well as undertaking substantive research on how to bridge Human Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals and Economic and Fiscal Policies' and engaging with the UN Universal Periodic Review process, the IBAHRI will continue support to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers and working with other like-minded NGOs to do so.
- In 2016, the IBAHRI trained delegations of lawyers from a number of jurisdictions in international human rights and relevant UN mechanisms as well as co-convening a meeting of human rights lawyers from across Eastern Europe and Central Asia with the UN Special Rapporteur to discuss the risks and threats that they face. The IBAHRI very much hopes to continue this aspect of its work through its UN Programme in 2017 to promote international human rights standards amongst the legal profession as well as supporting lawyers at risk.
- The IBAHRI will continue to develop and implement its programme of working with law students, young lawyers and established human rights practitioners from Azerbaijan in the coming months, following a series of successful training sessions in 2016 which focussed on international human rights law and advocacy before the European Court of Human Rights. As well as continuing this aspect of the programme, the IBAHRI aims to deliver training on engagement with UN mechanisms and conduct human rights litigation in national courts.
- As well as continuing with its well-established capacity-building programme to support the establishment of a new national bar association in Tajikistan, the IBAHRI intends to work with Bar Associations in Kazakhstan this year to provide technical assistance and training to lawyers from several regional Bar Associations.
- Outside of the region, in 2017 the IBAHRI will continue with its Bar Association Capacity-Building programmes in Myanmar and East Timor, as well as its longstanding torture prevention training programme with defence lawyers, public prosecutors and judges in Mexico.
- Through its Section on Public and Professional Interest, the IBA continues to recognise outstanding work and achievements in the field of pro bono work and amongst young lawyers. These awards are presented annually at the IBA Annual Conference.
- The IBA's Bar Issues Commission (BIC) and Legal Policy & Research Unit (LPRU)'s 'Programme for Excellence' is continues to be offered as a pilot project to member bar associations. The project allows the Bars to show their commitment to achieving 'excellence,'

and, by utilising existing IBA legal instruments, provides an opportunity for the IBA to collaborate with member Bars who are engaged in global legal reform initiatives. The BIC believes that this will encourage all member Bars to strive towards a strong commitment to excellence, innovation and ethical operations, and provide an opportunity to share knowledge and experience.

- The BIC has launched the IBA Legal Regulators Directory, available online via this link: http://www.ibanet.org/IBA_Regulation_Directory_Home.aspx. This is a directory of those who regulate legal practice in major jurisdictions across the world, with contact information and a brief overview of each regulator's scope of authority.
- The BIC and the IBAHRI launched at the IBA's Annual Conference in Washington last September, the updated 'Benchmarking Bar Associations' book, which is available in hardcopy and online via this link: <http://www.ibanet.org/barassociations/Benchmarking-Bar-Associations.aspx>. The new book has a much broader reach in that the areas of guidance have been significantly expanded and updated. New areas covered include membership services, regulation, representation, ethics, disciplinary and complaints procedures, rule of law, human rights and access to justice, pro bono work and international work and relations.
- The IBA's Legal Practice Division (LPD) continues to be most active within Europe and already for 2017 there will be 28 specialist conferences covering a diverse range of legal matters.
- The LPD will be looking to build on the success of the first ECA Forum held in the Ukraine in 2016 and we are currently developing a strategic plan to enhance the presence of the IBA in the Europe-Caucasus-Asia economic region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan).

As exhibited by these aims and activities, the IBA is dedicated to enabling an exchange of information and views among Bar Associations and individual members covering all practice areas and professional interests. I look forward to working with you all towards these goals.

Martin Solc
President, International Bar Association