

IBA President's report on 2018 Activities

In my final year as President of the International Bar Association (IBA), I am pleased to share with you our progress and some highlights of our plans for 2018.

This year we are delighted to be hosting our Annual Conference in Rome, taking place from 7-12 October. 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 (BIC).

I will continue to emphasise 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.

The work is advancing on my Presidential Task Forces and priorities, which I established at the start of my term and continue to be the focus of my tenure as President:

- **The Future of Legal Services**
This Task Force, chaired by the IBA Secretary-General, was 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). Part of this work is exploring steps to be taken by the regulators, law firms in order to prepare for such changes. All the IBA entities are participating in these efforts to address 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.
- **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 have established this 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 is developing 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 that I believe will be of interest to your organisations:

- The IBAHRI's UN Programme, based in Geneva, continues to grow. In 2017, the IBAHRI provided three oral statements to the recent 36th session of the UN HRC in Geneva, and provided several reports for the UN Universal Periodic Review process. In addition to continuing this work, the IBAHRI will continue support to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers and work with other like-minded NGOs to do so.
- In 2017, the IBAHRI trained delegations of lawyers from a number of jurisdictions in international human rights and relevant UN mechanisms, and facilitated the attendance of a number of human rights lawyers from across Eastern Europe and Central Asia to several international meetings, Conferences, and UPR sessions in order to discuss the difficulties facing their jurisdictions. The IBAHRI hopes to continue this aspect of its work through its UN Programme in 2018 and to promote international human rights standards amongst the legal profession and support lawyers at risk.
- The IBAHRI completed its programme working with law students, young lawyers and established human rights practitioners from Azerbaijan at the end of last year, following a series of successful training sessions in 2016 that focussed on international human rights law and litigation before the European Court of Human Rights. The successful three-month Mentorship Scheme, which partnered senior lawyers with junior lawyers in Azerbaijan to provide practical experience on human rights, was one of the topics discussed at a one day Law Students Conference arranged by the IBAHRI in December. The IBAHRI aims to continue its work to increase the capacity of human rights lawyers in Azerbaijan and the involvement of young lawyers in human rights litigation in the country in 2018.
- The IBAHRI has been providing expertise on the initiated reforms of the legal profession and bar in Kazakhstan, and will continue working with Kazakhstani lawyers towards the promotion of independence of the legal profession in the coming year. The IBAHRI will also continue its training programmes developing a new generation of lawyers in Tajikistan.
- Outside of the region, in 2018 the IBAHRI will continue its longstanding torture prevention training programme with defence lawyers, public prosecutors and judges in Latin America. The IBAHRI will also begin its training programme for Syrian lawyers on international and national human rights and accountability mechanisms and its global project on increasing knowledge on importance of gender parity across justice related institutions.
- With its Section on Public and Professional Interest (SPPI), the IBA continues to recognise and support outstanding work and achievements in the field of pro bono work, amongst young lawyers and women in the legal profession, through the presentation of awards and special training courses.

- The IBA's Bar Issues Commission (BIC) will be hosting its annual Bar Leaders' Conference in Oslo from 23-24 May. Once again, this key event will bring together delegates from around the globe to discuss the latest developments, and so often thorny issues, affecting the profession of law today.
- The BIC'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 and the IBA's Access to Justice and Legal Aid Committee have launched a project, which envisages producing a document of guidelines that will provide a list of underlying principles that should apply to any legal aid system. This will include examples of how different jurisdictions around the world have created legal aid systems applying these principles to their specific circumstances and resources. The purpose of the document is to assist bar associations and law societies to be aware of the issues that must be considered when a legal aid system is established or reformed in their country.
- The BIC's International Trade in Legal Services Committee has prepared a handbook, 'What model for cross-border joint practice?' to assist IBA member Bars and law societies, or other authorities responsible for lawyer regulation, when dealing with the practical and regulatory issues that arise when local and foreign lawyers form some kind of 'association' or joint practice. This work was prompted by enquiries from a number of IBA Member Organisations who expressed interest in understanding how other jurisdictions have tackled this issue. The handbook can be downloaded online via:
<https://www.ibanet.org/Document/Default.aspx?DocumentUid=7048d493-f1ec-4605-92ef-fbcbaccaa258>.
- The IBA's Legal Practice Division (LPD) continues to be most active within Europe and already for 2018, there will be 28 specialist conferences and events covering a diverse range of legal matters.
- The LPD continues to develop its 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 and Uzbekistan) and will this year hold its 3rd ECA Conference in Kazakhstan.
- The IBA continues to pay special attention to the Baltic countries and this year hosts the 10th edition of the Balkan Legal Forum.

The IBA is steadfast in its dedication to enabling an exchange of information and views among Member Organisations and individual members covering all practice areas and professional interests. I look forward to continuing to work together with you towards these objectives.

Martin Solc
President, International Bar Association