

## **Scholars Report on 2023 IPBA Conference Dubai – Wen Fi Chen (Fiji)**

This is my report on my attendance of the 2023 IPBA Conference in Dubai as an IPBA scholar. Firstly, let me just say that it was a privilege and an honour to be part of the conference and to meet my fellow scholars in person after the COVID pandemic. Special thanks go to the IPBA Scholarship Committee and the Secretariat, in particular Mr Mahesh Rai, Ms Rhonda Lundin and Ms Yukiko Okazaki, for their hard work and dedication in bringing us together.

The first day of our trip consisted of specially curated pre-conference events for the scholars. We visited the prominent law firms of Hadeef & Partners, and Al Tamimi & Company where we were given an introduction on the UAE legal system, law making and the DIFC. We also received a tour of the DIFC Courts where we had the honour of meeting the Vice President, His Excellency Justice Ali Al Mandhani, who briefed us on the DIFC Courts and their ability to offer foreign investors in the DIFC a familiar dispute resolution forum that applies common law. In particular, I found the discussion on the issue of jurisdiction, as against the “onshore courts”, to be quite fascinating. The remainder of the day/evening was filled with receptions, namely, the Women Business Lawyers Reception, the IPBA Scholars and New Members Reception and the Welcome Reception. In particular, I was especially glad to have attended the Women Business Lawyers Reception where I met fellow female lawyers and heard inspiring stories from women who overcame adversities to become legal practitioners in male dominated societies.

Days Two to Four of the Conference were filled with plenary and concurrent sessions. I found the beginning of Day Two to be especially memorable thanks to Mr Jack Li who sang the IPBA anthem, We Are Together. Overall, I found the sessions to be highly educational and topical – even for one from a Small Island State in the South Pacific such as myself. I attended sessions on the topics of minority shareholder rights, ESG, environmental law climate change, employment law and international dispute resolution. Looking back, my only wish is that I had a time turner<sup>1</sup> so I could go back in time to attend other concurrent sessions.

Between sessions were tea time and breaks where we could socialise to our heart’s content and hand out a business card or two. Evenings were filled with dinner where we could drink, eat and do a dance or two.<sup>2</sup> During one of the evening receptions, my fellow scholars and I were fortunately to meet with Prof. Dr. Eckart Brödermann who generously gifted us copies of his book, UNIDROIT Principles of International Commercial Contracts, an Article-by-Article Commentary. Further, there were many fun activities such as getting our names written in Arabic and henna hand painting.

---

<sup>1</sup> For those unfamiliar with Harry Potter, a time turner was a magical device for time travel, resembling an hourglass on a necklace. It was used by Hermione Granger in the third book to rewind time so she could attend all her classes that took place simultaneously.

<sup>2</sup> Sadly, not possible with me who possesses two left feet.

Looking back, the IPBA conference was one of the best conferences I have attended. The greatest thing about it was how it seamlessly combined serious legal discussions with events for socialising and mingling. I have gain much through the conference, not just in terms of knowledge but also in terms of friends. Once again, I am immensely grateful to the IPBA Scholarship Committee and the Secretariat for enabling me to become part of the IPBA family through the scholarship programme. If anyone reading this is unsure about whether or not to apply for the scholarship or even attending the conference, I would like to say: “Go or it. I promise you will not regret it. And I look forward to seeing you at the next IPBA conference!”