

**Conference Report<sup>1</sup>**  
**IPBA Annual Meeting and Conference**  
**23 – 26 April 2025, Chicago**

Prepared on: 12 May 2025

The IPBA Annual Meeting and Conference was held in Chicago, the third-largest city in the United States, from 23 to 26 April 2025, bringing together over 900 legal professionals from around the world. This prestigious event provided a valuable platform to build connections, exchange knowledge, and explore opportunities for professional growth. As a scholar, I had the privilege of participating in this remarkable gathering organized by the **Inter-Pacific Bar Association (IPBA)**.

To make the most of the conference experience, I had to prepare in advance by selecting relevant programs and planning my schedules carefully. The event featured two main categories of activities: working sessions and social events. To manage my time effectively, I consulted the daily agenda using the IPBA Conference Mobile App, which enabled me to choose sessions of interest, organize my social event schedule, and coordinate meetings with other delegates.

### **1. Schedule and Conference Highlights**

The following is a summary of my schedule during the IPBA Conference, with particular emphasis on activities organized by the IPBA Scholarship Committee and the conference program.

#### **23 April 2025**

##### *Scholars' Day*

I participated in Scholars' Day, an event dedicated to IPBA scholars. We began with a visit to Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, where we met with the Dean of International Programs. Following this, we visited the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois and met with Judge Sunil R. Harjani. We then proceeded to the Circuit Court of Cook County to meet Judge William Yu. The visit concluded with a networking lunch hosted at McDermott Will & Emery.

##### *IPBA New Member/IPBA Scholar Reception*

After departing from McDermott Will & Emery, we proceeded to Marriott Marquis Chicago, the conference venue, for the official reception. I registered at the reception desk and received my conference badge, which granted access to various sessions and social events.

I then attended the IPBA New Member/IPBA Scholar Reception, where my fellow scholars and I had the opportunity to meet members of the IPBA Scholarship Committee and other delegates. During this event, all scholars were formally presented with their scholarship certificates by **Ms. Miyuki Ishiguro**, the former President of the IPBA.

##### *Welcome Reception*

Following the IPBA New Member/IPBA Scholar Reception reception, all delegates were transported by bus to an offsite Welcome Reception at Wrigley Field, a Chicago's historic baseball stadium. Attendees enjoyed a lively evening at the ballpark, cheering for the baseball game and celebrating the start of the event in a crowd-filled setting.

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<sup>1</sup> This conference report is a summary prepared in good faith based on the discussions, presentations, and materials shared during the event. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, some opinions or references may include unintentional mistakes. This report is for general informational purposes only and should not be taken as legal or professional advice, nor as showing any political involvement. If any part of the content or references is found to be incorrect or unclear, please contact the author immediately at [nem@anant-lawfirm.com](mailto:nem@anant-lawfirm.com) so that corrections can be made.

**24 April 2025**

### *Opening Ceremony*

I attended the opening ceremony, where delegates from over 60 jurisdictions gathered in one hall, representing a diverse and united global legal community.

**Mr. Michael Chu**, the President of the IPBA, delivered the opening address with an inspiring message on unity and leadership in the legal profession. He emphasized that in a world of increasing complexity, the integrity of legal systems and international collaboration is more vital than ever. His remarks also paid tribute to the IPBA's foundational commitment to cross-border cooperation.

The **President of the Chicago Bar Association** spoke next, highlighting the shared identity of lawyers worldwide. He stressed that regardless of appearance, background, or political beliefs, lawyers are united in the profession. His remarks underscored themes of friendship and professional solidarity.

I also had the opportunity to hear from the **President of the American Bar Association (ABA)**. He delivered a compelling speech on the importance of defending the rule of law and reaffirmed the ABA's shared commitment with the IPBA. He emphasized that both organizations can work together, professionally and equally, with the powerful reminder: "Together, we are stronger."

### *Panel Discussion*

A key panel brought together legal experts to explore the intersection of the rule of law and international trade. Representatives from China, India, Mexico, Singapore, and Tokyo shared perspectives on pressing legal challenges, particularly in light of the evolving global geopolitical landscape. The discussions underscored that the rule of law remains the foundation for global trade and economic stability. As legal systems face increasing pressures from geopolitical and commercial forces, cross-border legal collaboration is more important than ever to navigate these complexities.

### *Concurrent Committee Sessions 1*

I attended the session titled *"Navigating Cross-border Insolvency Issues in Small and Mid-Sized Distressed Situations"*, where speakers from the United States, Canada, Japan, and Hong Kong shared key insights and experiences in handling cross-border insolvency cases.

At the conclusion of the session, I had the opportunity to ask one of the speakers a question regarding how the investigation of a debtor's assets is conducted within their jurisdiction. I explained that in some jurisdictions, this process is particularly challenging due to the absence of a centralized system for accessing information on private property and the complex ownership structures involving shareholders. The speaker acknowledged facing similar issues and professionally shared several practical and constructive tips based on their experience.

### *Concurrent Committee Sessions 2*

In the afternoon, following the lunch break, I attended the session titled *"PPP from Across the Globe – with Particular Emphasis on the Contracting Forms used in North America, South America, South East Asia, UK, and Europe."* Experts from various jurisdictions discussed the growing importance of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) across multiple sectors. The session highlighted key differences in contracting forms, financing models, and risk allocation strategies used across regions, providing a comparative perspective on how PPPs are structured and implemented.

### *Concurrent Committee Sessions 3*

Following the Session 2, I attended the session titled *"Build That Wall! Do FDI-ODI Restrictions Makes M&A More Parochial in the Current Geopolitical Landscape?"*. This session provided a comparative look at ODI and FDI regulations across key jurisdictions. This session highlighted a global trend toward stricter oversight of both inbound and outbound investments, with a shared focus on national security and some strategic industries. As regulatory landscape is becoming more complex, investors are advised to conduct thorough due diligence and seek legal consultation when planning cross-border investments.

### *Gala Dinner*

In the evening, participants attended the Gala Dinner, which provided an excellent opportunity to engage with peers and expand professional networks. The relaxed setting encouraged continued dialogue from the day's sessions and helped strengthen connections across jurisdictions.

### **25 April 2025**

#### *Concurrent Committee Sessions 4*

I attended the session titled *"Hot Sectors in a Heating World: Energy M&A."* Speakers from various jurisdictions shared insights on current global M&A trends in the energy sector. The session focused on regulatory frameworks, inbound investment considerations, and the growing strategic importance of energy-related transactions.

#### *Concurrent Committee Sessions 5*

I attended the session titled *"Generative AI in the Financial Sector: Use Cases, Legal Issues and Regulatory Considerations."* Speakers from various jurisdictions shared insights on how AI technologies are being applied within the financial sector and the evolving role of regulators in overseeing these developments. Key topics included operational use cases, particularly in Know Your Customer (KYC) processes, customer service, and predictive analytics as well as emerging legal and regulatory frameworks. The session underscored the accelerating integration of AI in financial services, while emphasizing the importance of data privacy, ethical use, and regulatory compliance.

#### *Concurrent Committee Sessions 6*

Following a social lunch, I attended the session titled *"ESG Due Diligence Practice."* The session provided a comprehensive overview of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles in the context of M&A transactions, with perspectives from multiple jurisdictions. Speakers emphasized the growing importance of ESG due diligence as a critical part of transaction risk assessment and highlighted common challenges faced during its implementation. The discussion also reinforced that ESG considerations are becoming integral to investment decisions and legal review processes.

#### *Concurrent Committee Sessions 7*

Later in the afternoon, I attended the session titled *"Post-Acquisition Governance Models and Post-Merger Integration."* The session explored key factors influencing the success of M&A transactions after closing, including governance structures and cultural alignment. Due to the limited information sometimes available during due diligence, one speaker recommended reviewing articles related to the target company as an alternative method to gain insight. Practical advice included the importance of regular client meetings during post-acquisition integration. Insurance considerations and risk mitigation strategies were also discussed as part of effective post-deal integration planning.

### *Farewell Dinner*

Delegates attended the Farewell Dinner to celebrate the success of the conference and the spirit of ongoing international collaboration. The evening also offered an opportunity to strengthen professional relationships. I also had the chance to reconnect with and bid farewell to new friends I met during the conference, including some members of the IPBA Scholarship Committee.

### **26 April 2025**

Following the morning sessions, all delegates gathered for the Annual General Meeting and Closing Lunch. This final gathering provided a moment to reflect on the conference experience and look ahead to future events. This platform not only fostered new connections but also facilitated meaningful discussions on various legal topics. The event came to a successful close, truly reflecting the conference theme: **"Transformation Everywhere All at Once: Business and Law in a Changing World"**.

I also had the opportunity to say goodbye to members of the IPBA Scholarship Committee and take a few final photos with fellow scholars, marking the conclusion of a meaningful and enriching conference experience.

## 2. Networking and Collaborative Opportunities

In addition to the sessions mentioned earlier, I had the opportunity to engage with delegates from various jurisdictions throughout the conference. I began by connecting with my fellow scholars, an impressive group of young lawyers representing Malaysia, Chile, India, Fiji, Nepal, Mongolia, and Australia. Despite a tight schedule, we managed to organize a last-minute hangout, strengthening both professional and personal ties.

Throughout the conference, during breaks, meals, and networking events, I exchanged insights with practitioners from diverse legal backgrounds and collected a substantial number of business cards from delegates across a wide range of jurisdictions. Attending the IPBA Conference in Chicago reminded me of several key transactions I have supported for U.S. investors. I advised a U.S.-based engineering and construction firm on regulatory compliance in Cambodia. At the firm level, our team assisted another U.S. corporate leader with compliance health checks and the Economic Land Concession (ELC) adjustment process.

Being part of the IPBA Annual Meeting and Conference 2025 was a truly rewarding experience. I am eager to attend future IPBA events, including the upcoming annual or committee conferences.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the IPBA and its officers for providing me with this exceptional opportunity. While I cannot list all the names, I would like to specifically thank **Mr. Michael Chu**, the President of the IPBA and Chair of the Chicago 2025 Organizing Committee, for his vision and leadership in organizing this event.

I am also deeply appreciative of **the IPBA Scholarship Committee** and its former Chair, **Mr. Mahesh Rai**, for their continued commitment to supporting young lawyers in the legal field. Additionally, I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to **Ms. Randa Morioka**, and **Ms. Yukiko Okazaki**, the IPBA Secretariat, for their invaluable assistance in coordinating all administrative and logistical arrangements for the scholars, ensuring our participation was possible.

My thanks go to **Lauren Salas, Ashley Justice, Keval Amin, and Connor Larson** from **McDermott Will & Emery LLP** for being such wonderful hosts during the Scholar's Day. Their hospitality and guidance made our first day in Chicago truly memorable.

The conference left me with this lasting impression: **"Beyond the conference! We started as fellow scholars and ended as friends."**

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