

Message from the Past Chair

Looking back on my year as Chair of the International Section, I feel both a sense of accomplishment and of gratitude. It was an active and productive year for both me and the Section. Together, we made progress on many of the Section's core missions and achieved some significant milestones. One of the benefits of being Chair is that you get to take credit for many of the accomplishments of others. So, let me describe some of the achievements of the past year and thank those who were responsible.



Andrew D. Otis

The Section's long list of successful meetings continues to grow, thanks to our many active members.

In October, 2012, we held a very productive seasonal meeting in Lisbon, Portugal. Prior to the meeting, we held our first Section meeting on the African continent: a day-long pre-meeting in Casablanca, Morocco. The meeting featured several excellent speakers and was well attended by New York lawyers. Many thanks to Mehdi Bennani, Abd El Karim Khoukhi and Mouhamed Zaouni for their efforts in organizing the meeting. In addition to the lovely facility in which it was held, highlights of the Lisbon meeting included excellent addresses by Professor Antonio Borges and United States Ambassador to Portugal Allan J. Katz. In addition to the usual array of informative programs and enjoyable social events, the meeting also featured memorable dinners generously hosted by local law firms. Many thanks to program co-Chairs Pedro Pais de Almeida and Neil Quartaro for all of their efforts to make the meeting a success. And, of course, a special thanks to the indomitable Rita Menano Osorio without whose organization skills, good humor, and generous family the meeting could not have occurred.

In January, 2013 the Section held its Annual Meeting in New York where, in addition to a fascinating panel on compliance issues, the Section presented its annual award for Distinction in International Law and Affairs to the diplomatic corps as a group. United States Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns accepted the award and former diplomats Robert B. Oakley and Phyllis Oakley were also honored. Deputy Secretary Burns' moving and thoughtful acceptance speech is linked on the Section's website (www.nysba.org/international) under past events. The Deputy Secretary's presence at our meeting would not have occurred but for the strong relationship that the Section has built with the State Department

Office of Private International Law. More on that relationship and the Section's relationship with the United Nations and the United Nations Council on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) later.

In March, 2013 the Section held in Milan its largest and most successful European regional Chapter Chairs meeting to date. Many thanks to Italy Chapter Chair Marco Amorese for hosting us both in Milan and in lovely Bergamo for an excellent and very well attended program on the fashion industry and two fantastic social events.

My year as Chair culminated with the Section's second bi-annual Global Law Week in May, 2013. This was not only an impressive showcase of the New York international legal community, it was also very well attended by many Section Chapter Chairs from around the world. Thanks to Global Law Week Co-chairs Mat Kalinowski and Enrique Lieberman for their dedication and hard work in producing this almost weeklong showcase for New York law and to Constantine Economides for taking over and improving the Fundamentals of International Law program. Thanks also to Michael Galligan, the "father" of Global Law Week whose steady encouragement and unrivaled connections made the program a premier event not only for the Section but for the New York international legal community. The program culminated in a fantastic and, as far as I know, unprecedented plenary event moderated by former New York Court of Appeals Chief Judge Judith Kaye and featuring now-retired State Department Assistant Legal Advisor for Private International Law Keith Loken and the UNCITRAL Director, Renaud Sorieul.

The Section had many very successful meetings but they only describe a portion of the Section's activities over the past year.

The Section has become an active and respected Non-Governmental Organization at the United Nations and especially before the UNCITRAL. This is due in large part to the boundless energy and encyclopedic knowledge of Contract and Commercial Committee Co-chair Albert Bloomsbury and to the invaluable contributions by Microfinance and Inclusion Committee Co-chairs Azish Filabi and Julee Milham. Thanks also to those many Section members and others who volunteered their time to represent the Section at various UNCITRAL plenary and working group sessions.

In September 2012, the Section submitted a statement to the United Nations High Level Meeting on the Rule of Law and was honored to send Albert Bloomsbury and UN and Other International Organizations Committee Co-chair Nina Laskarin to attend the meeting.

In March 2013, Brazil acceded to the United Nations Convention on the International Sale of Goods, in part due to the efforts of former Section Chairs Michael Galligan, Carl-Olof Bouveng, and Drew Jaglom, and Albert Bloomsbury, Brazil Chapter Chair Isabel Franco and Austria Chapter Co-chair Otto Wächter over the course of three years of working with local bar associations in Brazil to convene meetings of prominent jurists on the topic.

The Section also became active at the NYSBA House of Delegates with Section delegates Drew Jaglom, Michael Galligan and John Hanna representing the Section in negotiations over the content of the NYSBA Task Force on Nonlawyer Ownership of law firms and a related HOD resolution. We were able to negotiate suitable resolution language at the December 2012 NYSBA HOD meeting but realized that there was a lack of understanding within the NYSBA of the potential impacts on New York as a legal market of current New York nonlawyer ownership rules and ethical opinions. Thus, I created a Section task force on nonlawyer ownership, Co-chaired by Drew Jaglom and United Kingdom Chapter Co-chair Jonathan Armstrong, that will gather information from relevant Section Chapters to develop materials that will help fellow NYSBA members thoroughly understand the impact of current laws and ethical opinions on the cross border practice of law.

Last but by no means least I want to thank the Section's tireless liaison Tiffany Bardwell. In her first full

year as the Section's liaison she learned the Section's business very quickly and provided invaluable assistance organizing the Section's meetings and, along with Executive Vice Chair/CIO Thomas Pieper, reorganized the Section's website to become much more user friendly.

Ultimately, the success of the International Section depends on the thousands of contributions of dedicated volunteers who believe in the Section's mission and are willing to contribute their time. I want to thank all of you who spoke on a panel, helped organize a meeting or contributed to a publication. I urge all of you to continue to spread the word among your friends and colleagues that the International Section of the NYSBA is a vibrant and important world-wide group of international lawyers that they should join.

As you can see, it was a busy year and we made much progress. It was my pleasure to serve as Section Chair and I am grateful for the time and effort that you all contributed to the Section and our profession. I leave you in the very capable hands of Section Chair Glenn Fox and wish him and you a productive 2013-2014.

I hope to see all of you at future Section events.

Andrew Otis
aotis@curtis.com