

International Lawyers Network (ILN) Focus

The International Lawyers Network (ILN) is an association of 91 high-quality, full-service law firms with over 5,000 lawyers worldwide. Headquartered in New York, the Network provides clients with easily accessible legal services in 66 countries on six continents

The ILN provides a forum for prestigious legal firms from around the world to meet the needs of an increasingly globalised world economy, by collaborating with firms who provide a broad range of practice areas, including Corporate and Commercial Law, Securities Law, Taxation, Commercial Litigation, Employment and Expatriate Law, Government Contracting, Intellectual Property Law, Estate Planning and Administration, and Alternative Dispute Resolution.

The Network, founded in 1988, recently celebrated its 21st anniversary last year, according to ILN Executive Director, Alan Griffiths. When asked about the Network's philosophy, Mr Griffiths commented: "We focus primarily on what benefits our member firms the most: prioritising personal relationships with each other, which in turn develops a lot of business for our member firms."

"One of the major benefits of the Network's membership is the ability for members to talk to each other and ask questions. The ability to contact anybody around the world with a question, and to have it answered quickly without charge is very helpful, even if no referral takes place. This is something that all of our members realise as a benefit in assisting their clients to the fullest extent possible. When referrals are made, we find that the response times are excellent. A lot of referrals are based on the need to act quickly, so it is very useful that the Network vets firms prior to admitting them for membership, which provides the member firms with a seamless and efficient way to afford their clients with the required expertise. I think the attorneys see this as a beneficial business philosophy."

In terms of ILN's structure, the Network traditionally accommodates one member firm per country. However, this structure is not rigid, and Mr Griffiths noted that each country is considered on an individual basis. As an example, the Network has two firms in New York: Epstein Becker & Green, which is a general practice firm and the founding ILN member, and Cooper & Dunham, which specialises in Intellectual Property. Mr Griffiths said: "The ILN believes that all member firms benefit from representation in all commercial jurisdictions. Under that philosophy, we are currently talking to three or four firms in India and additional firms in China to enhance our coverage."

He added: "We see the ILN's future as being an ongoing process of building; our regional groups are very strong, but we continue to look at and add to areas where we don't have representation. In regards to our recruitment goals for the coming year, one of the areas we will be focusing on is the United States."

The ILN Administration works with member firms when recruiting by collaborating on recommendations for new member firms where representation is needed. Mr Griffiths noted that this has been a highly successful methodology, with 80% of the Network's current member base recommended by exist-



ing members firms. The members have direct experience with these prospective firms, which has proven invaluable. ILN members are normally mid-size law firms in the top ten of their respective jurisdictions.

According to Mr Griffiths, relationships among member firms are the cornerstone of the ILN. These relationships are built through the ILN's conferences, which are conducted in person and electronically, the former taking the form of annual and regional meetings. He said: "Regional and Annual conferences are organised by the ILN Administration and hosted by the member firm based in that jurisdiction. The ILN also works to facilitate the electronic methods of communication and coordination with member firms."

He added: "Next year's Annual Meeting is going to be in Bangkok. It has been some time since we had an Annual Meeting in Asia and we are excited that this will give us the opportunity to showcase the Asia Pacific Region."

For more information please visit www.iln.com



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International Lawyers Network (ILN) Firms

AFRICA

NIGERIA – George Ikoli & Okagbue

GEORGE IKOLI & OKAGBUE (the firm) was established in direct response to the dynamic challenges of a growing and expanding economy such as Nigeria's. Expanding on that vision, the firm has witnessed tremendous growth primarily as a result of its unparalleled professionalism evidenced by timely delivery of quality services at competitive rates.

The partners bring with them vast and varied experience drawn from their different areas of specialisation, and have handled some of the more notable transactions in corporate Nigeria.

With a full complement of up to date information technology systems, the firm is able to deliver cutting edge and up to the minute legal advice and services.

15 principal members of the firm operate in five specialist departments. George Ikoli & Okagbue is the only member for Nigeria in the International Lawyers Network and scored a Continental first by being appointed in 1997 as the first legal counsel for the AFRICAN PETROLEUM INSTITUTE established in Cape-Town, South Africa, an appointment which it retains to date.

ASIA

CHINA (Hong Kong) – Sit, Fung, Kwong & Shum

Founded in 1981, Sit, Fung, Kwong & Shum has established a solid practice with a broad client base, which includes leading multinational, public and private companies and professional firms. Now with 11 partners, the firm also employs 15 qualified lawyers, 7 trainee lawyers, 1 patent attorney and around 70 support staff. There are four notaries public and four China appointed attesting officers within the firm. Most of the lawyers are qualified to practice in other jurisdictions in addition to Hong Kong, including England, Australia and Singapore. Headquartered in Central, Hong Kong, the firm is also operating a branch office in Xi'an, Mainland China.

The majority of Sit, Fung, Kwong & Shum's staff are conversant in both English and Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) and some have additional language capabilities, including Japanese. According to partner Tommy Tam, "Besides maintaining a strong network of associate law firms in major Chinese cities, several partners and associates of the firm have undergone training in PRC law with some having obtained degrees in PRC law."

The firm's major practices include banking; corporate finance; joint ventures; intellectual property (local and overseas patent, design, copyright and trademark registration, licensing and enforcement); public listing; corporate restructuring; arbitrations and mediations; commercial and property litigations; white collar crimes and ICAC cases; insider dealing inquires; judicial reviews and appeals; tax planning; insurance; construction claims; mortgage actions; and conveyance (including block property transactions, property development and mortgages). Other major practice areas include trusts; probate; tenancy matters; and notarisarion and attestation for various types of documents to be used overseas and in the Mainland.

When asked what prompted the firm to become a member of ILN, the association of full-service law firms with over 5000 lawyers worldwide, Mr Tam said it was "to enhance the firm's connection with eminent legal professionals from various jurisdictions, and to obtain legal support from them when required." According to Mr Tam, further advantages afforded to the firm via its association with ILN include marketing, mutual referrals and support. He added: "It



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is also particularly helpful when we have to handle multi-jurisdiction transactions and cross-border litigations. Through attending various conferences, we have managed to build up close relationships with other members and have been able to learn from different cultures, providing useful exchanges, support and opportunities.”

CENTRAL AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC – Mejía-Armenteros & Abreu, S.A.

According to Santiago Mejía Ortiz, partner at Mejía-Armenteros & Abreu, S.A. law firm, based in the Dominican Republic, the firm prides itself on being a “family comprised firm”, able to successfully serve all clients’ needs, regardless of individual practice areas. Mr Ortiz added: “We render all Corporate and IP services (including immigration law, real estate, etc) as well as litigations.”

As a way of increasing its global clientele, influence and expertise, Mejía-Armenteros & Abreu, S.A. is a member firm of the prestigious International Lawyers Network (ILN), the association of 91 high-quality, full-service law firms with over 5,000 lawyers worldwide. The network provides clients with easily accessible legal services in 66 countries on six continents. Mr Ortiz noted: “The main aspect that attracted us to the ILN was because it is mostly a mid-size firms association, meaning that we find ourselves surrounded with mid-sized old fashioned firms, still valuing customer satisfaction with a close and personal approach.

“Through our membership in the ILN, our clients get the confidence and added value of a whole structure of law firms throughout the world and the availability and readiness of a solid law firm in a desired jurisdiction. Our clients not only have a local legal counsel, but a global legal counsel as the ILN gives our firm the opportunity to secure and protect our clients’ rights and interests in other countries.”

Mr Ortiz added that from a professional point of view, the ILN provides Mejía-Armenteros & Abreu, S.A. with the opportunity to offer clients a comprehensive, global perspective on their needs and requirements, as well as the extensive expertise and analyses of worldwide known experts. Being part of the ILN has allowed the firm to compete with larger firms, and to assist clients beyond physical country borders. “We have been able to gain access to international clients that most likely would not have come to our firm,” said Mr Ortiz. “The ILN meetings and events are very important. They provide important networking and referrals opportunities and help to develop friendships. It gives you the opportunity to be updated on your areas of interest and to learn and share from everybody else’s experiences.”

PUERTO RICO – Goldman Antonetti & Córdova, PSC Goldman Antonetti & Córdova, PSC (GAC) is a Puerto Rico full service law firm with a large, diversified practice, serving local, national and international clients involved in business transactions and

litigation in Puerto Rico. The firm’s lawyers provide representation before federal (USA) and Puerto Rico courts and before government agencies. Shareholder Luis D. Ortiz-Abreu commented: “We assist clients in domestic and foreign negotiations and transactions, protecting clients with interests in Puerto Rico against various risks presented by the increasingly complex web of federal and Commonwealth law.”

GAC recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. The firm’s offices are located in the American International Plaza building in the heart of Hato Rey, San Juan, Puerto Rico’s financial district. GAC’s attorneys bring a wide range of experience in business, law and government to its practice, providing legal representation that obtains favourable consideration by courts, policymakers and regulators. Many of the firm’s current complement of approximately 36 lawyers hold advanced or academic degrees, serve as authors and instructors for the legal community and are recognised as civic leaders.

According to Mr Ortiz-Abreu, it is GAC’s goal to provide each client with a unique, efficient and effective legal solution. Depending on the circumstances, that solution might be provided by a single attorney or by a legal team composed of lawyers with experience in various areas. GAC’s practice is divided into four basic area departments: Corporate and Banking including real estate, environmental law and business formation; Employment Law including defence of discrimination claims and immigration; Litigation, providing representation in English and Spanish in the US and Puerto Rico court systems; and Tax Law, providing representation in issues under local, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and US federal tax laws.

Mr Ortiz-Abreu said of the firm’s ILN affiliation: “As stated on ILN’s website: ‘The International Lawyers Network provides a reliable framework for business people to find the help they need.’ For half a century, GAC has provided local, regional and international clients with legal counsel marked by excellence, credibility and creativity. In the context of an increasingly global economic environment, it is only natural for GAC to associate itself with ILN and offer our services and expertise in such broad context.”

EUROPE

CYPRUS – Antis Triantafyllides & Sons LLC Antis Triantafyllides & Sons LLC, established in 1955 by Mr Antis Triantafyllides, is one of the longest lasting law firms on the island of Cyprus. The firm currently employs 23 lawyers qualified in Cyprus and/or abroad, whilst the firm’s practice is highly international with strong corporate, banking and finance departments. In addition, Antis Triantafyllides & Sons LLC provides corporate secretarial services for a large number of Cypriot companies, many of which benefit from the region’s double taxation treaty network.

The firm also maintains a strong litigation department, and legal services are provided in all additional areas of law. Antis Triantafyllides & Sons LLC’s founding partner, Mr Antis Triantafyllides, is a Cypriot member of the Court of Arbitration of the

International Chamber of Commerce.

In addition, the firm has been a member of ILN, the association of 91 high-quality, full-service law firms worldwide, since the association’s inception. According to Mr Stelios Triantafyllides, the firm became affiliated with the association in order to gain access to reputable lawyers worldwide, and therefore be in a position to assist clients whenever they need legal advice from different jurisdictions. He added: “Another significant benefit of the ILN membership for our firm is the creation of personal contacts. However, the advantages that the firm receives from the ILN are limited at present, and the number of referrals is also limited. The ILN membership has not directly benefitted the firm during the economic downturn, and has not allowed our firm to access a larger market for our services.

“ILN events and conferences do, however, provide the opportunity to the attendees from our office to update their knowledge on recent developments in other jurisdictions, to exchange thoughts and ideas with colleagues, and to make new friendships.”

THE NETHERLANDS – Udink & De Jong

As a first-generation member of ILN, Udink & De Jong in The Hague (the “Legal Capital of the World”) has had the satisfaction and pleasure of watching ILN grow in size and reputation and of both contributing to and profiting from that growing renown.

Udink & De Jong is a full-service corporate-commercial law firm, established in one of the most beautiful and stately parts of The Hague. The firm in particular offers advice and litigation assistance in the fields of corporate law; financing, banking and financial services; corporate restructuring and insolvency; employment law; intellectual property and trademarks.

According to Dutch standards, the firm is medium-sized, but its service and expertise are those usually associated with much larger firms. Its geographic focus is, first, the whole of The Netherlands and, furthermore, the world. English, French and German are spoken as a matter of course.

Partner Willem den Hertog commented on the firm’s practice and its ILN network affiliation:

“Udink & De Jong prides itself in delivering prompt, efficient and effective service to clients in The Netherlands and abroad. In both instances, membership of ILN is advantageous. It enables the firm to easily find foreign representation for its clients and Udink & De Jong knows that its partner firms in ILN will give the quality service that the client has come to expect. As Dutch member, Udink & De Jong often receives referrals from its friends in other countries who know that their clients, too, will receive first-rate service.”

According to Mr Den Hertog, Udink & De Jong sees its membership of ILN as a win-win proposition: it allows the other firms around the world to profit from their expertise and they, in turn, profit from their partners’ excellence. He added: “Next to that sound business rationale, Udink & De Jong also values the opportunities to meet other members at the regular meetings around the world in a spirit of professional development and true friendship. Udink

& De Jong is happy and proud to be an ILN member and hopes long to continue being so.”

PORTUGAL – MGRA

Mouteira Guerreiro, Rosa Amaral & Associados – Sociedade de Advogados R.L. (MGRA) is a global law firm focused on providing legal support to companies, investors, and state and regulatory bodies in critical and complex aspects of their activity. The firm’s assistance emphasises global support and contributes towards the fulfillment of clients’ tax and legal obligations, as well as adding value and optimising the efficiency of their businesses.

The firm has offices in Lisbon, home to 32 professionals with expertise in Banking and Finance, Tax, Capital Markets, Corporate and Commercial, Intellectual Property, Project/Asset Finance, Real Estate and Construction, Litigation and Insolvency, EU and Competition, M&A, Employment and Pensions, Aviation and Shipping, Public and Environmental Law, Telecoms, Tourism and Leisure, Natural Resources and Energy, Health and Biotechnology, Distribution and Franchising.

According to Raquel Salgueiro of MGRA’s administrative department, MGRA represents public and regulatory bodies, leading national and international companies, banks, insurance companies and financial institutions, and became a member of the International Lawyers Network (ILN) to assist with advisory work during the downturn. Ms Salgueiro noted: “ILN is one of the most renowned organisations of independent law firms, and we wanted to be a part of the project. The referrals arranged through ILN are important for business, and it helps having a credible and friendly law firm based in the core countries in which our clients require assistance. This increases our ties with them, as well as our visibility, in the projects and investments made in our country.”

MGRA renders its services internationally, providing comprehensive day-to-day assistance to its clients. MGRA partners have assisted numerous major Portuguese and international commercial enterprises, and have accumulated years of professional experience in the key industries, and in the essential areas of business economy. In the upcoming years, MGRA aims to increase the quality of its services rendered through a policy of investments in IT, management of knowledge and continuous training of its professionals.

On the topic of the benefits afforded via MGRA’s Network affiliation, Ms Salgueiro noted: “There are many benefits, namely when you are dealing with multinationals or with international projects located in various jurisdictions. Ties are of utmost importance – usually business comes with no difficulty when people meet and gain confidence. Teams are exactly that.”

For more information please visit www.mgra.eu

SWEDEN – Ekenberg & Andersson Law Firm Ekenberg & Andersson Law Firm is a full-service commercial law firm specialising in all areas of commercial law. The firm’s clients include small, medium and large Swedish and foreign companies

and its main focus areas encompass Mergers & Acquisitions, Dispute Resolution, Intellectual Property, Real Estate, and IT and Telecoms.

According to lawyer and partner Thomas Ekenberg, Ekenberg & Andersson joined the ILN network in the early ‘90s to offer a broader and more competent advisory service, to gain a deeper insight into foreign law, and to retrieve reliable advice from fellow members firms based around the world when required. Mr Ekenberg commented: “Being a member of the network has resulted in receiving as well as referring cases to fellow members. The past year alone, we have had a handful of successful transactions where we have provided legal assistance to other member firms in the M&A field.”

In August of 2008, Ekenberg & Andersson collaborated with ILN’s Finnish member, Peltonen, Ruokonen & Itäinen, on the acquisition of Euro Tank AB by the Haanpaa Group. The Haanpaa Group is a leading logistics company, providing widespread logistics services in the field of liquid chemicals and materials.

Ekenberg & Andersson’s affiliation with ILN has brought other successes, too. Mr Ekenberg explained: “Our collaboration with ILN members continued in 2009 when we worked with ILN member Burton & Company of Auckland, New Zealand, to assist in Barmac Investment Ltd’s acquisition of the majority shareholdings in Nexus Marine AB. Nexus Marine AB is a world leading manufacturer of navigation instrumentation for racing and cruising yachts and was previously a part of the Silva Group.”

Ekenberg & Andersson’s consistently busy schedule has proven that despite the economic downturn, experienced and specialised legal practices will manage to stay resilient, especially when backed by the cooperation of a global network and the client referrals and informational conferences that that entails. The firm is looking forward to further acceleration in 2010 as ILN continues to widen the firm’s geographic scope as well as its expertise. Mr Ekenberg added: “The events that our lawyers have attended through ILN have not only resulted in great business and exchange of legal experiences, but also in life-long friendships.”

For more information please visit www.ekenbergandersson.se

OCEANIA

NEW ZEALAND – Burton & Co

Burton & Co is a boutique commercial law firm with its offices in Auckland. The firm was established 20 years ago and comprises three partners previously from large New Zealand law firms, a team of senior lawyers, legal executives and support staff. It maintains a commercial clientele based in New Zealand and elsewhere around the world. Clients of the firm include high net worth individuals, SMEs and listed companies.

According to partner Tony Nicholson, being a member of prestigious legal association ILN has enabled Burton & Co partners to build personal relationships with international lawyers. He noted: “The ability

to offer clients access to these lawyers has proved invaluable for their international activities.” He also explained that membership has enabled the firm to assist clients of ILN members who are attracted to New Zealand through its foreign investment opportunities.

Mr Nicholson added: “The belief at Burton & Co is that we do what we do well. If confronted with an area in which we do not have a sufficient level of expertise, then the work is briefed to those that we believe are best able to achieve the desired result.” For more information please visit www.burtonco.co.nz

USA

US – Texas – Beirne Maynard & Parsons Beirne, Maynard & Parsons is one of the largest litigation firms in the Southwest, representing companies in trials, appeals, arbitrations and other proceedings throughout the world. According to partner Martin Beirne, the firm focuses on the needs of corporate clients who know the value of extensive trial experience, solid case preparation and insightful strategic planning. He noted: “We litigate and arbitrate in areas from energy and intellectual property to construction, insurance, healthcare, franchise, and many more.”

Founded in 1987, the firm has become a significant force in trial law, having evolved in recent years to achieve exceptional reach and depth. Mr Beirne said: “We believe that our affiliations with other fine law firms practising elsewhere in the US and worldwide are vital to our ability to tap external resources on behalf of our clients.”

Mr Beirne explained that cross-border transactions and dispute resolution, along with international taxation and employment issues, are increasingly prevalent issues for clients as a result of the US economy’s ongoing globalisation. He said: “The quality of ILN’s member-firms, as well as their large range of global locations, allows us to provide our clients with access to some of the most outstanding lawyers in the world.”

As Mr Beirne also said that the firm’s affiliation with ILN has provided a great service to Beirne, Maynard & Parsons’ client base throughout the downturn. “We are able to connect them with excellent and truly localised counsel in almost any of the numerous jurisdictions where they need assistance,” he noted. “We believe this contributes to the reduction of their international legal costs and provides them with superb support with their legal issues.”

When an ILN member-firm recommends another ILN firm to a client, they do so with first-hand knowledge of the lawyers. ILN events provide member firms with the opportunity to meet other members first-hand and to hear them speak. Mr Beirne said: “This ensures that we have met every attorney that we recommend to our clients. ILN events also serve as tremendous opportunities for us to showcase our firm globally. They are an ideal venue to meet lawyers from around the world and discuss dynamic legal issues with a cross-section of the international legal community.”