

International Weekend 2019

London, United Kingdom

26-29 September 2019

Conference Report

Participants: Angel Wong & Katrina Lee

INTRODUCTION

1. The International Weekend is an annual event jointly organized by the Junior Lawyers Division (“**JLD**”) of the Law Society of England and Wales, the Young Barristers Committee (“**YBC**”) of the Bar Council of England and Wales, the European Young Bar Association (“**EYBA**”) and the London Young Lawyers Group (“**LYLG**”).
2. This year’s International Weekend comprised of tours around the Courts in London and a number of seminars on current topics given by a panel of respectable speakers, and culminated in a Gala dinner.

DAY ONE

Registration and Reception

3. The day began with a short reception where delegates could get to know each other. We had the chance to greet the representatives from the organisers who warmly welcomed us.
4. During the reception, Angel talked to Ms. Athena Markides, the Chair of the YBC in England & Wales. Ms. Markides kindly shared with Angel about their work, which includes hosting annual workshops and some sessions where experienced practitioners share their life experience with the young barristers. In response, Angel also briefly introduced Ms. Markides to the work of the YBC in Hong Kong, such as hosting talks and volunteering events.



Tour of the Commercial Court

5. We were taken on a tour around the Commercial Court at the Rolls Building, during which we heard an address from Sir Geoffrey Vos, Chancellor of the High Court. Sir Geoffrey Vos discussed the technological developments in the legal practice in the UK, which includes the use of online courts, ADR, use of smart contracts and crypto-currency, and reforming the way disputes are resolved in courts. We learnt that the UK judiciary is actively incorporating and using technology in their courts, for example the use online courts for small claims, divorce and social security cases. It is interesting to consider whether similar developments can be made by the courts in Hong Kong.

Tour of the Central London County Court



6. Located inside the Thomas Moore building of the magnificent Royal Courts of Justice, the Central London County Court is one of the busiest County Courts in the country. We were honoured to have had the opportunity to sit with His Honour Judge Dight, where we discussed the role of County Courts in the country and the importance of live evidence in court proceedings. It was interesting to learn from a fellow delegate from Paris that live evidence is rare in civil proceedings in France, in contrast to the position in Hong Kong, UK and Italy.
7. Overall, we gained a fuller understanding of the courts and tribunals judiciary in the UK and it was interesting to learn about the differences in the legal systems amongst the EU jurisdictions from the other delegates.

Wine, Beer & Food at Dynamic Vines

8. In the evening, International Weekend delegates were invited to join a wine tasting session at Dynamic Vines. Six different kinds of white and red wines of different sources and maturities, three per each set, were introduced to us. We talked to delegates from other jurisdictions on topics ranging from organising networking events to current affairs.

It was a precious opportunity to understand how the delegates viewed each other's hometown!

DAY TWO

Bullying & Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

9. In this session, Ms. Beatriz Martinez, the projects coordinator of the International Bar Association (“**IBA**”) spoke about the prevalence of bullying and sexual harassment in the legal profession.
10. According to a survey conducted by the IBA in 2018, bullying and sexual harassment are rife in the legal profession: *“Approximately one in two female respondents and one in three male respondents had been bullied in connection with their employment; and one in three female respondents had been sexually harassed in a workplace context, as had one in 14 male respondents.”* In particular, it was noted that Oceania experienced the highest prevalence of both sexual harassment and bullying in the legal profession.
11. However, despite the high number of bullying and harassment incidents, there is an astoundingly low number of reporting of such cases, for reasons including fear of repercussions and the profile of the bully.
12. The IBA has provided ten recommendations to assist in combating bullying and sexual harassment issues, including implementing policies and training sessions, and exploring flexible reporting models to encourage victims to speak out if they encounter these problems.
13. It is clear that these issues are real and serious problems that need to be addressed. We note that the IBA has provided ten recommendations to assist in combating these issues, including implementing policies and training sessions, and exploring flexible reporting models to encourage victims to speak out if they encounter these problems. We believe this topic is one worth exploring by the Hong Kong Bar Association.



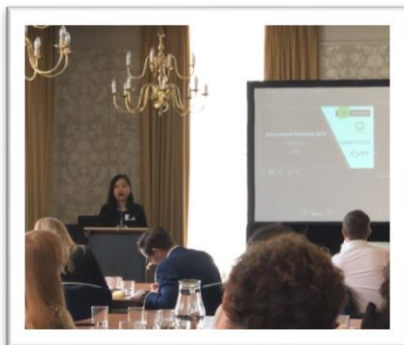
100 Years of Woman in the Law

14. In this session, Ms. Lucinda Acland, a non-practising lawyer and volunteer with the First 100 Years Project, shared with us how the position of women in the legal field have developed in the past 100 years. In particular, she mentioned events preceding to the enactment of The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919, which provided that a person would not be disqualified from exercising judicial functions or becoming a civil servant by sex or marriage.



15. The journey of striving for women's rights in the profession did not end there, as Ms. Acland further elaborated on the difficulties faced by female practitioners in the years after, from being teased in cartoons to getting criticized for setting up a set of Chambers. The situation incrementally improved when more female practitioners voiced out their opinions and excelled in their practice. Nowadays, the percentage of females amongst junior lawyers in some places is satisfactory, although less so in the city firms as more women prefer working in-house.
16. This talk reminded us that the rights that we now enjoy as female barristers should not be taken for granted, as they are the result of long-term perseverance of our predecessors.

International Oratory Competition



17. Angel participated in and won the International Oratory Competition held during lunch. Angel picked the topic "Instagram vs Reality" and spoke about the two types of people that made her prefer reality to Instagram. She also shared her observations and her own experiences to convince the audience.

Cross Border Work

18. The conference resumed after lunch. In this session, four speakers (Mr. Hugh Mercer QC, Essex Court Chambers; Ms. Sarah Vasani, Partner of Addleshaw Goddard; Mr. Brian Kotick, Associate Attorney of Winston & Strawn London LLP; Ms. Andrea Stauber, Senior Associate of King & Spalding International LLP) shared their personal experience in doing cross-border work. In particular, Mr. Mercer spoke about the need to be creative in coming up with solutions for legal problems and how comparative law could be helpful, using the *Fairchild* case as an example to demonstrate how looking at case law in other jurisdictions when solutions are lacking in your own jurisdiction.

The Art of Negotiation

19. This session focused on the skills and principles on effective persuasion and negotiation. Mr. Graham Massie, Director of Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution spoke about the six principles of persuasion (including reciprocity, scarcity, authority, consistency, liking and consensus) and the common errors that are made in negotiations. It was interesting to consider how these principles and skills could be employed in our work as barristers.

Persuasive Advocacy (in criminal cases)

20. As the original speaker for Persuasive Advocacy was unavailable, this session was replaced by a sharing session by Ms. Joanne Kane from Carmelite Chambers, alongside with Ms. Athena Markides. Ms. Kane described how life was like at the criminal bar in England and tips for preparing for cross-examination in trials.
21. We were impressed by how passionate both speakers were with their practice. We also noticed that the difficulties faced by criminal barristers in England are somewhat similar to those in Hong Kong. It may be useful for us to follow up on how barristers there combat those issues and see whether the same can be applied in Hong Kong.

The Gala Dinner

22. The Gala Dinner was a delightful event where we enjoyed a nice meal with lawyers from different countries at The Hall of The Law Society. It began with speeches by Ms. Amy Clowry, Chair of the JLD, and Ms. Joyce Herrent, President of the EYBA, to thank the delegates for attending the International Weekend, followed by a spectacular meal. It was a remarkable occasion for all of us.



CONCLUSION

23. Lastly, we wish to thank the Hong Kong Bar Association for their generosity in subsidizing us for the conference expenses.

Dated the 25th day of October 2019.