Growing Diversity and Inclusion Strengthens Our Committee

By Jorge Mestre and Renee Dopplck

The broad membership diversity of the International Energy and Natural Resources Committee provides valuable perspectives from a spectrum of legal disciplines, legal systems, geographic areas, and cultural contexts. Collectively, members live or practice law in more than 30 countries on six continents and speak a variety of languages. They work in small to large firms, corporations, nonprofits, non-governmental organizations, government, and academia. They also reflect many career levels, from students to seasoned experts. The Committee is open to all Section members interested in energy production, energy services, renewable energy, mining, forestry, fishing, and a wide range of other natural resources sectors.

Leveraging Diversity to Maximize the Benefits of Committee Membership

Growing diversity in our committee membership is important to our ability to provide useful information, quality education programs, networking opportunities, and professional support for our members worldwide. Our committee also creates opportunities for members to develop relationships with potential partners for cross-border collaboration, local counsel in foreign jurisdictions, joint ventures, and public-private initiatives.

Broad global participation during this past year helped us make progress on our committee’s diversity goals. Across all our activities, committee members received up-to-date information on legal, regulatory, and industry developments and trends in 28 countries around the world. Our seasonal conference programs provided comparative studies of legal practices in Africa, Asia, Europe, Eastern Europe, South America, and the United States. Our committee newsletter provided insights into developments in 14 countries. For Year in Review 2013, we had a record 15 authors and editors report on cutting-edge developments in 14 countries. We also doubled the number of members participating in our monthly conference calls, where we discuss program ideas, progress on our business plan, and projects for the months ahead. Moreover, this year’s diversity outreach inspired a diverse range of candidates to apply for all levels of committee leadership positions for next year.
Promoting Diversity in New Committee Membership

A look at our newest members shows that at least 35% are located outside the United States, including in Argentina, Bulgaria, China, Germany, Mexico, Singapore, and Turkey. Women make up half of the new members. Roughly 40% of the nearly 30 members of our newly formed subcommittee on hydraulic fracturing are from jurisdictions outside the United States.

About 13% of our newest members are law students, with many of them recruited by members of our committee leadership team. Two students attended the Spring Meeting in New York.

Diversity as an Ongoing Committee Priority

Building and supporting a diverse and inclusive environment within our committee is an ongoing process. We cannot succeed unless we continue to increase and broaden participation. In addition to raising awareness of diversity issues, we need to take action. Our committee continues to look for dedicated members to provide regular diversity updates within the field and to assist with implementing diversity approaches and outreach. We also would like to learn about additional strategies, best practices, and resources that other committees have found successful for the recruitment and retention of diverse lawyers and law students.

Diversity Strategies

Our Committee’s diversity strategies include:

- Inspire and mobilize further action to reach a diverse range of energy and natural resources legal professionals and law students
- Discuss key opportunities for and barriers to involvement by members in different geographical regions, in different types of workplaces, and in varying stages of their careers
- Share best practices and lessons for fostering diversity within the Committee and within the broader legal community of the energy and natural resources sectors
- Seek input from members on diversity-related opportunities
- Provide opportunities to support diversity in the pipeline of committee leadership
- Encourage action-based diversity approaches
- Foster an inclusive culture in committee discussions, activities, and events