

NYSBA Signs Agreements With Osaka, Milan and Philippine Bar Associations

By Christian Nolan

Continuing its mission to expand its global presence, the New York State Bar Association entered into historic cooperation agreements this spring with the Osaka Bar Association in Japan, the Milan Bar Association in Italy and the Philippine Bar Association in the Republic of the Philippines.

NYSBA entered into a “Memorandum of Friendship” with the Osaka Bar Association (OBA) on the evening of June 4 (June 5 in Osaka), entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Milan Bar Association April 28 and signed the MOU with the Philippine Bar Association (PBA) June 17.

“The signing of the document is but the beginning of a strong friendship that will benefit and grow both of our historic and important organizations,” said NYSBA President T. Andrew Brown during the event with the OBA. “This, I think, shows the importance of a bar association to its members – and the support that organizations such as ours can play in advocating for and supporting lawyers,” said Brown.

Hiroshi Tanaka, OBA’s president, signed the agreement, as did Edward K. Lenci, chair of NYSBA’s International Section. Before signing, Lenci addressed the audience in Japanese about the friendships he had made in Japan and his hope to make new ones. Lenci studied at ICU in Japan in 1985-86 and worked as a summer intern in 1988 at Mori, Hamada & Matsumoto, one of Japan’s “big four” law firms.

The impetus for entering the agreement arose during an OBA fact-finding mission in 2019. The delegation was in New York to gather data on digitalization in U.S. courts. Lenci and former Section Chair Neil Quartaro gave the delegates a crash course on the U.S. judicial system and accompanied the delegates on their court visits.

Milan Bar Association

The Milan Bar Association in Italy is a mandatory bar association of about 25,000 lawyers. The MOU formalized the relationship the two associations have built over the years. Several years ago, through NYSBA’s International Law Section, the two associations held a joint event in Milan.

According to the MOU, the two associations would seek to exchange legal information, materials and publications recognizing their “mutual support for the rule of law and the development of legal research throughout the world.”

Additionally, the two associations hope to address international legal issues more effectively through international programs, virtual or in-person; outreach projects; and developing and improving their understanding of the laws of other jurisdictions relevant to international business transactions, commercial disputes, human rights, and the transnational delivery of legal services.

Then-NYSBA President Scott M. Karson and Milan Bar Association President Vinicio Nardo signed the MOU.

“During these times, alliances such as ours are more important and meaningful than ever. That is why our relationship must expand beyond an occasional in-person event,” said Karson.

Karson described Nardo as “a highly respected criminal lawyer who takes great pride in promoting civil and human rights for all.” Nardo also provided remarks before signing the accord. Nardo discussed both nations’ efforts to overcome the health and economic crises brought on by the global coronavirus pandemic.

Also present at the virtual ceremony were Francesca Maria Zanasi, chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Milan Bar Association; Jay Himes, then-chair of NYSBA’s International Law Section; and Andrew Otis, a for-



Osaka Bar Association President Hiroshi Tanaka holds up the signed MOU with NYSBA.



International Section Chair Edward Lenci displays the signed MOU with the Osaka Bar Association.

mer section chair and program manager for the event.

Philippine Bar Association

The MOU with the PBA – the oldest voluntary national organization of lawyers in the Republic of the Philippines – made note of both association’s staunch advocacy for the rule of law.

“At this time in our history, it is imperative that lawyers in our communities, in our state, and across the globe come together and stand up for the rule of law,” said Brown. “The rule of law is the bedrock principle of a civil society. It is our foundation as lawyers. It is the basis of our shared mission and our shared values as lawyers.”

On behalf of the PBA, the MOU was signed by its incoming president Rico V. Domingo. Domingo also

serves as chair of NYSBA’s Philippines chapter of the International Section. Lenci also signed the accord. Additionally, Brown thanked Jose Perpetuo M. Lotilla for his exemplary leadership as president of the PBA over the past year.

NYSBA has now entered into numerous MOUs with bar associations around the world, including other recent collaborations with the Nigerian Bar Association, Seoul Bar Association in Korea, the Dai-Ichi Tokyo Bar Association in Japan and the Bucharest Bar Association in Romania.

NYSBA, a voluntary bar association with over 70,000 members, has members in all 50 states and in over 100 countries worldwide. The International Section has over 60 chapters around the world.

(Brandon Vogel contributed to this article.)