Successful Annual Meeting cements INTA’s presence in Asia

Surpassing all expectations, 8,605 IP professionals from over 150 countries travelled to Hong Kong for the International Trademark Association’s (INTA) 136th Annual Meeting. The fantastic turnout made this Annual Meeting one of the largest in recent years and the largest ever outside of North America. Among the 8,605 attendees were a record 2,774 IP professionals from 26 countries across Asia, and 805 from mainland China alone.

Promoting trademarks
The meeting officially kicked off at the May 12th Opening Ceremony with a welcome address from INTA President Mei-lan Stark. Ms. Stark recounted her personal experience with trademarks growing up as a way to underscore the important role that trademarks play in the daily lives of consumers, “Trademarks have been integral in consumers’ lives for hundreds of years,” said Ms. Stark. “I firmly believe that trademarks are one of the most powerful, most efficient, and most effective forms of communication ever devised.” Ms. Stark went on to outline INTA’s recently implemented 2014-2017 Strategic Plan and called upon the global trademark community to join the Association in its mission to revive these sentiments in the public’s collective heart, “It’s time to recapture the public’s imagination about trademarks, and get them to invest in the value that trademarks bring to them personally and economically.”

Engaging governments and associations
A key measure of success for INTA at its Annual Meetings is government participation. With more than 40 IP offices, IP attachés, and public authorities traveling to Hong Kong, a record number of governments were represented at the 2014 Annual Meeting. The educational program also included a number of government-led
sessions, where users had the unique opportunity to interact with the IP Offices, several of which were also conducted in Mandarin and simultaneously into English. One of these sessions featured Chinese government officials from several departments and facilitated open discussion between panelists and attendees. On the panel were Deputy Director Li Zhenzhong of China’s National Leading Group on the Fight Against IPR Infringement and Counterfeiting (NLGO), Judge Yin Shaoping, of the Intellectual Property Tribunal of China’s Supreme People’s Court; Ms. Zhang Feifei, from the Division of Intellectual Property Rights at the Economic Crime Investigation Department of the Ministry of Public Security; and Mr. Tao Xinliang, Dean of the Intellectual Property Institute of Shanghai University. Judge Shaoping commented that one of the challenges for Chinese courts, as for many courts around the world, is a lack of understanding about IP. “We need to have more understanding in order to reach a consensus,” said Judge Shaoping. “One of the purposes of this session is to gain an in-depth understanding about IP and trademarks through exchanges such as this; such collaboration is something we must and need to continue.”

The Annual Meeting was provides INTA leadership with an opportunity to meet with leaders from other associations as well as governments. The Association signed two separate agreements aimed at strengthening relationships with key organizations in Asia. On May 11, Ms. Stark signed a Cooperation Agreement with the Quality Brands Protection Committee (QBPC) that will serve to deepen collaboration between the two organizations. The following day, Ms. Stark met with the Hong Kong Intellectual Property Department’s (HKIPD’s) Director, Peter Kam-fai Cheung, to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the office, which will also serve as a starting point for increased interaction and cooperation. INTA CEO Etienne Sanz de Acedo took the opportunity to thank Mr. Cheung personally for all of his time and assistance throughout the meeting, and said that INTA looked forward to working more regularly with the HKIPD in the future.

Also at the Annual Meeting, representatives from the China Trademark Association (CTA), which is under the leadership of China’s State Administration for Industry and Commerce (SAIC), introduced CTA’s mission to INTA leadership and explained their key goal of publicizing and implementing China’s new Trademark Law. INTA also hosted a number of officials from Guangdong Province IP-related ministries. Notably, officials from Guangdong Customs attended the full committee meeting of the Anticounterfeiting Committee.

Loosening the ties
Every Annual Meeting ends with a Grand Finale, and this year attendees enjoyed private access to Hong Kong Disneyland! With free rides in three Disneyland lands, plus food, dancing and drinks, INTA members left the Annual Meeting with memories for a lifetime.

Committing to Asia
INTA will continue to build its presence in Asia. In 2015, the Association plans to open a representative office in Southeast Asia and hold a conference in Asia on nontraditional marks. And, during his opening ceremony address, Mr. Sanz de Acedo announced that INTA will bring the Annual Meeting back to Asia in 2020.

INTA’s 137th Annual Meeting will take place in San Diego, California, USA on May 2-6, 2015.