So far 2014 has been an eventful year for the International Trademark Association (INTA). While we have already marked many milestones to be proud of, we still have much to look forward to, and much work to do. For the association, the year began with the launch of its 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, which has steered our ship through the year so far.

One of INTA’s overarching objectives is to build bridges with all stakeholders in intellectual property, including governments, non-governmental organisations and other associations—both in and outside of IP. It is through these relationships that INTA is able to advocate globally on behalf of brand owners and consumers everywhere. It also means that we travel—a lot! Here are some of INTA’s milestones from 2014:

### India

For several years and in response to calls for assistance by its members, the association has made India a strategic priority. In February 2014, I led an INTA delegation to New Delhi and Mumbai. Together with INTA staff and members, we met with government officials, the media and members. Most notably, we were pleased to engage in a long and productive discussion with India’s controller general of patents, designs and trademarks, Chaitanya Prasad. We commended the many improvements in the trademark office’s practices and procedures over the past year, including improved electronic filing capabilities and increased transparency in the status of cases.

Of course, the major recent accomplishment for India is its accession to the Madrid Protocol. At the time of our visit, the registry had already received more than 4000 international applications. But, given Indian trademark owners’ unfamiliarity with and lack of understanding about the advantages of the Madrid system, fewer than 100 international applications had been filed through the trademark office. Prasad encouraged INTA to assist in educating Indian trademark owners about the Madrid system. In turn, we offered access to experts, such as those on the association’s Madrid system subcommittee, and their vast experience with Madrid Protocol member country offices and processes.

We also applauded the recent news regarding the Indian government’s ongoing commitment to IP improvements. Only last week India’s Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) voted to continue with a plan to modernise the country’s IP offices. This will help Prasad’s office adapt to tighter timelines under the Madrid Protocol and cope with an increasing number of trademark applications.

### Southeast Asia

We were off again in March 2014 on our delegation through China, Hong Kong, Japan, Myanmar and Singapore. The delegation kicked off in Tokyo where, in the spirit of building bridges, we held our first meetings with customs and the IP High Court. We also met with government partners at the Japan Patent Office (JPO) and association counterparts at Japan Trademark Association, Japan Patent Attorneys Association and Japan IP Association.

Meeting with members is also a key objective of INTA delegations. In doing so we are able to bring members from different industries together to discuss shared issues and establish common goals. From Tokyo we travelled to Beijing where we hosted a well-attended luncheon on online counterfeits.

More than 100 INTA members attended and contributed to a lively discussion about how the sale of counterfeit products online is being addressed at the practical level in China. Victor Liu (NBA Properties) discussed the National Basketball Association’s efforts and experiences with combating online fakes. David Ho of Alibaba Group described the e-commerce business’s procedures for addressing counter-
feats online. We will return to Beijing in October to follow up on this successful event.

**Hong Kong**

The major milestone for INTA in 2014 was the Hong Kong Annual Meeting. With 8608 total attendees from more than 150 countries, the association’s first annual meeting in Asia surpassed expectations and set a record for the largest annual meeting outside of North America. Among the attendees were a record 2776 from Asia and 2732 from Europe, also a new record.

Several sessions were conducted in Chinese, and the INTA Daily News for the first time featured content written in both English and Chinese. The 2014 annual meeting was INTA’s third outside of North America, having previously held successful annual meetings in Amsterdam in 2003 and in Berlin in 2008. The next two meetings will take place in San Diego and Orlando, before returning to Europe in 2017.

While in Hong Kong, INTA signed two separate agreements aimed at strengthening relationships with key organisations in Asia. On 11 May 2014, on behalf of the association, I signed a cooperation agreement with the Quality Brands Protection Committee (QBPC) that will serve to deepen collaboration between the two organisations. The following day, I met with Hong Kong Intellectual Property Department director Peter Kam-fai Cheung to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the office, which will serve as a starting point for increased interaction and cooperation.

**Europe**

In July, INTA CEO Etienne Sanz de Acedo toured Brussels and Paris in a battery of back-to-back meetings and engagements with: the European Generic Medicines Association (EGA), the European Commission’s DG Internal Market and Services, Business Europe’s trademarks and designs working group and Brazil’s National Institute of Industrial Property.

A highlight of the trip, Sanz de Acedo met with secretary general Kunio Mikuriya of the World Customs Organization (WCO) to sign an MOU, the focus of which is to strengthen coordination among customs through education and training projects, and to allow a better exchange of information and best practices between customs and the private sector. The two organisations agreed to place a strong emphasis on public education in order to raise awareness about the dangers of counterfeiting and its impact on the global economy.

**Latin America**

As I write, Sanz de Acedo and a delegation of INTA staff and local members are travelling through Brazil, Colombia and Panama for a series of high-level government meetings. Notably, they will meet with superintendent José Luis Londoño Fernandez of the Superintendency of Industry and Commerce of the Republic of Colombia (SIC) to sign an MOU. Through this partnership INTA and SIC will increase cooperation and work to improve trademark protection for Colombian and international brands. Together, we will work to: (i) improve and advance harmonisation; (ii) strengthen public policy; (iii) increase cooperation between government and the private sector; and (iv) enhance the role of trademarks in economic development.

The delegation is well timed as they will be in Brazil for the 14th International Congress of the Brazilian Association of Intellectual Property (ABPI). The INTA delegation will join representatives from regional and international governments and organisations including the International Association for the Protection of Intellectual Property (AIPPI), the National Confederation of Industry (CNI), the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI), and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

The theme of the meeting is IP as a key factor for economic growth. The delegation will end with an INTA anti-counterfeiting roundtable in Rio de Janeiro to discuss enforcement practices in Brazil as the nation transitions from the World Cup to the Olympics.

**Looking ahead**

Over the next four months INTA will host six events on three continents. On 18 to 19 September 2014, we will meet in San Francisco for our internet conference. The conference, Internet, Innovation and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN): The Evolving Landscape of the Net, will see attendees dig into issues such as augmented reality, governance of the domain name system (DNS), IP infringement on social media, new gTLDs and the rights protection mechanisms (RPMs), and consumer data collection and usage.

We will also use this opportunity to preview the upcoming ICANN meeting taking place in Los Angeles, California, in September.

In October 2014, we travel to Beijing for a full day conference on online counterfeiting, followed by a half-day brand building conference, concentrating on 21st century brand building of Chinese brands going abroad. We will discuss registration strategies, online issues, and bad-faith registrations abroad, and other issues facing Chinese brands abroad.

We will also use the occasion to meet with officials from the State Administration for Industry & Commerce (SAIC), the Supreme People’s Court (SPC), the State Intellectual Property Office (SIPO), and the National Leading Group on the Fight against IPR Infringement and Counterfeiting (NLGO).

Our Trademarks Administrators and Practitioners Meeting (TMAP) takes place on 12 to 15 October in Arlington, Virginia, just outside of Washington DC, and will feature representatives from the Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market (OHIM), the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) and WIPO. We are really excited to be taking TMAP abroad next year for the first time. TMAP 2015 will take place in Alicante, Spain.

Finally, on 8 to 9 December, we’ll be in Munich for When Trademarks Overlap with Other IP Rights, the goal of which is to provide attendees with a solid understanding of the many opportunities and pitfalls of intersecting rights.

The conference will also provide a platform for speakers and attendees to reflect on the nature of trademark law and its relationship to the other areas of IP protection, and how policy should best address these overlaps.

The programme boasts a lineup of noteworthy speakers, including professor Jeremy Phillips (Olswang LLP, London, Queen Mary Intellectual Property Research Institute, founder of the IPKat blog), who will provide the keynote address, Overlaid, Overlegislated and Overload-ed: Trademarks in the Twenty-First Century.

In addition, Ronald Van Tuyl (JT International, secretary of the INTA 2014 board of directors) will host a special lunch time VIP interview with Christoph Ernst, Ministerialdirigent, head of directorate at the German Federal Ministry of Justice, and Mihály Ficsor, vice president for legal affairs at the Hungarian IP Office.

Join Us

INTA will continue to engage with all stakeholders in IP, and will continue to find new and exciting ways for everyone involved IP globally to participate in INTA.

If you can’t join us at one of the upcoming conferences, consider one of the many INTA roundtables taking place in various cities around the world.

And, of course, we hope to see you in 2015 at the 137th Annual Meeting in sunny San Diego, California. **IPPro**