

## QATAR LAW FORUM

30<sup>th</sup> May 2009

### The Legal Profession Today: Local and International Practice

Supported by Qatar Lawyers' Association and the Gulf Lawyers' Association

*A session facilitated by Professor Ashish Nanda (Faculty Chair, Center for Law and the Profession, Harvard Law School, USA), with contributions from Rashid Nasser bin Al-Nuaimi (President, Qatar Lawyers' Association) and Dr Said Hilal bin Mohamed Al-Busaid (President, Gulf Lawyers' Union, Oman), and the attendance of leaders of international and national bar associations and law societies from around the world.*

#### Session overview and conclusions

The practice of law is undergoing immense change. Movement of firms and lawyers across jurisdictions is becoming increasingly frequent. Competition has intensified across jurisdictions and with it comes pressure for legal regulatory change. Lawyers and their organisations (firms, bar associations) need to be both forward and outward looking if they are to navigate this transformation of the profession.

Much discussion at the session turned on the relationship between local and international lawyers. Can this be called competition or co-operation? Are international and local firms competitors or complementary?

*“Local and international firms offer different services and so complement one another and cannot exist without each other”* observed counsellor El Beshry Shorbagy. Others noted that international firms bring skills, contacts and scope, but need to ensure they follow local professional regulations and norms. Local firms bring experience of domestic practice and procedure in both transactional and litigation matters. There is an opportunity for cross-training – international firms training local lawyers in specialised skills and local firms educating international firms in local norms and circumstances.

*“As time goes on the ability of a lawyer to handle a matter standing alone is becoming increasingly difficult”* noted Ken Freeling, attorney. Today's legal practice is, by necessity, team driven. The scope for individual lawyers, whether operating locally or internationally to work on their own is limited. Local and international firms that adapt and work together are likely to achieve the greatest success in this environment.

For law to be portable across jurisdictions, i.e. lawyers and their firms being able to work across borders, it is important that licensing is available at the highest level. A question arose of whether this should be done regionally, nationally or beyond. A key challenge in this is how to ensure that standards are maintained when lawyers practice their home law, but in a different country.

**Rapporteurs:** Monde Michello (*Zambia*) and Machaille Al-Nuaimi (*Qatar*)