

# According to

**INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE GROUP**

A Leading International Association of Lawyers, Accountants & Tax Specialists



Edition #09, December 2014

## Seasons Greetings

Again a special newsletter, all about the International Practice Group, but also about the wonderful conference we had in **Dubai**, a warm goodbye and a big thank you for **Friedhelm Gruber from Graham, Tony and Francesca** and important information about the next Spring conference in **Paris from Romuald and Olivier**.

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Europe

## Happy Christmas and all the best for 2015

Article by **Graham Wallace**

I hope that this newsletter finds you well. For those of you who went to Dubai I hope that your trip back home was uneventful. I am sure that you will join me in congratulating the hosts of our Dubai conference on a most excellent event. For all Members, I look forward to seeing you in Paris in May 2015.

As most of you will know, our Chairman Friedhelm Gruber announced his resignation as Chairman and from the Board at the Dubai Members' Meeting. This was indeed a surprise to us all. You will recall that the Board had a mandate for 5 years until October 2015 to remain in place, but due to personal reasons Friedhelm decided that this was the appropriate time to step down.

Since 2008 the Board has had stability and, under the leadership of Friedhelm, the group has grown substantially. The merger with Picatrex and the dedication of key Board Members to recruitment, together with the support and recommendations of Members, has allowed us to add many new Members around the world at a fast pace.

As the new Chairman for the group I would like to take this opportunity to thank Friedhelm for his leadership and support to the Board over the years and I know his continuing membership of the group will continue to benefit us all. Francesca Falbo and Tony Mead have kindly written some additional words about Friedhelm for this newsletter and I am sure they can express our gratitude better than I.



Friedhelm Gruber and  
Graham Wallace

Following the change, the Board have met to discuss our strategy going forward. We would like to expand the Board with two new Members and I invite people who wish to become involved to contact me directly. We have also started the process of defining a new strategy for the next three years and we shall circulate this before the next conference in Paris and present this to the Members at the Saturday General Meeting. Amongst other things, we wish to develop practice groups within IPG to represent individual specialisms and encourage more technical exchange of information between and at conferences.

We wish to expand the support for the Members' Coordinator and the Ethics and Advisory Committees. We wish to expand the Saturday Members' Meeting to encourage more debate on the direction of the group. We want to work on presenting the group to clients by way of building our brand via the internet presence of IPG. This is a small sample of the ideas discussed and the Board will present a focus for our priority for implementing these ideas and other plans before the next conference. If you have any suggestions for consideration then I would be pleased to hear from you.

Until then I wish you all a Happy Christmas and all the best for 2015



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Europe

## Friedhelm now just an “ordinary member”

Article by **Tony Mead**

**Those of you who were members in back in 2008 will no doubt recall that IPG, popular that it was had rather lost its way as an organisation and during that year there emerged an urgent and unexpected vacancy for a new President.**

Friedhelm agreed to step into this role. Whether it was entirely voluntary or he was subject to “waterboarding” may never be known but I do recall a conversation in Liechtenstein that left me in no doubt that this was the right person for the job and I was glad that he had accepted.

As a result our organisation changed. Out went the Presidential status which was replaced by an executive one. Friedhelm became Chairman and the Committee the Board. In came sound business principles and a pragmatic approach. You can see for yourselves the events that have happened since.

Under Friedhelm’s stewardship IPG has been transformed to make it the organisation it is today and which we as its members can be proud of. It is no longer a small European group of professionals who get together socially twice a year and occasionally make referrals to each other, but a truly international association of lawyers, accountants and tax advisers who transact business regularly and successfully with each other throughout the year offering their clients international advice globally with confidence. Smaller firms can now compete with larger ones in different jurisdictions thanks to their membership.

Friedhelm’s legacy to IPG is a sound strategy, a strong Board and an organisation that any good professional firm will want to be a member of and I thank him for that. I am also confident in its future and that it will be ably chaired and built on by Graham and his colleagues.

With Friedhelm now just an “ordinary member” he will at least have a little more free time, some of which I shall look forward to spending with him in Paris and at future conferences.

Sincerely,



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Worldwide

## Wonderful conference in Dubai!

Article by **Klaus Bertram and Jens Langendorff**

**This year the autumn conference was held in the city of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. It has been a while since IPG had a conference outside of Europe. Despite the longer travelling distance for the larger part of the members, the number of delegates attending was overwhelming. The conference was hosted by our member firm [Senat Management Consultancy FZE](#).**

After at least two years of preparation by the host, the final programme not only looked fantastic but also worked out to be a great conference resulting in many business and networking opportunities. Due to the special energy and atmosphere of the city of Dubai, but mostly due to the incredible effort of the hosts the conference resulted in an extraordinary conference which will long be remembered.

Traditionally, the Thursday is reserved for the pre-conference social events. This time it was possible to it was possible to go skiing at Ski Dubai at the Emirates Mall or to go Go-Karting at the Dubai Autodrome! Amazing! Of course, the traditional tennis and the golf tournaments have not been forgotten. Klaus Bertram from [DELTA Revision GmbH](#), Mannheim, Germany described his golf experience as follows:

“Just before the opening of the conference some delegates and spouses attended the traditional IPG-conference golf tournament. At 6:30 in the morning we headed off to the Montgomerie Golf club, not far from the conference hotel. Eleven players managed to get their tee time and shortly after entering the club all of us knew it was worth getting up that early. The course was wonderfully prepared, long holes with nice tee shots, short

cut roughs which were harder to play than they looked and challenging greens.

Apart from the variety of holes the players had some spectacular views to the skyline of Dubai. We very much appreciated to breath clear air although it seems that we sometimes were able to touch the skyscrapers as they seemed to be so close. We had to learn that playing golf in Dubai is not only to get up early but also you have to hurry as everybody wants to finish soon to not stay too long in the hot sun. The players were motivated and tried to give their best and it turned out to be an exciting competition.

Who will be the winner? Finally it was a close decision.... On the spectacular par 5 18<sup>th</sup> hole it was again Karina Emmertsen (LEAD Legal Advise Denmark) from Copenhagen / Denmark who took the win with 30 points. Duncan Stennatt ([Barnes Roffe LLP](#), London / UK) and Patrick Halfpap ([Aderhold Rechtsanwaltsgesellschaft mbH](#), Duesseldorf / Germany) followed as runners-up with 29 points each.



On the terrace of the Montgomerie Golf club we finished the tournament with some beers and discussions where we lost the points, why we missed the approach to the green and how happy we were when hitting a perfect shot. It was an excellent opener to an excellent conference, so many thanks to the organizers who made this a perfect day for all of us".

On Thursday afternoon we went to the "SandBar". This amazing venue was located outside on a grassed area along the beach side of the Westin Hotel. Surrounded by the typical Dubai skyscrapers on one side and a spectacular view of the Palm Jumeirah and the Arabian Gulf on the other side made the buffet the ideal location for the first catch up with old friends and colleagues and networking.

The Saturday morning started with a nice run along the Dubai Marina for those who went to bed on time! After a nice breakfast in the morning sun the conference started at 9:30 in the morning. Our former chairman Friedhelm Gruber made his last opening speech and by doing so he gave the starting point of a very interesting conference full of interesting topics and speakers. First of all we had a presentation by the Department of Trade and Commerce Marketing on "Dubai, why people visit and why they decide to stay". [Mario Volpi](#) from [Prestige Real Estate](#) presented "The View from Burj Khalifa: Impressions From an Insider" and surprised many of the delegates with the huge development plans the city of Dubai has. The presentation was followed by a very interesting forum discussion "The 2008 Challenge in Dubai, what happened and how did Dubai react".



Short presentations were followed by panel discussions on the key sectors of the UAE and Dubai, and how they contributed to the crisis and to the later recovery. These topics included: the organization of the State, company setup in Dubai, and the legal and financial systems, among others. Participants of the panel were Mr. [Mario Volpi](#) from [Prestige Real Estate](#), Mr. Peter Harradine from [Harradine Golf](#), Mr. Abdulatif Al Hammadi of [Al Hammadi Advocates and Legal Consultants](#), and Mr. Jean Paul Petoud of the [Emirates Investment Bank](#).

That doing business in Dubai can be very worthwhile was proven in the success stories about the firm [GC Leasing Middle East](#) presented by Ms. Joanna Bielicka, Mrs. Sabine Reindel, and Mr. Thomas Sauerteig and the firm [Help AG Middle East](#) by Mr. Christian Lumperda.

After an amazing buffet in the AOC French Brasserie at the Conference Hotel, Sofitel JBR, the afternoon was completed with a presentation about Shariah Law by Abdulatif Al Hammadi followed by Q&A., a presentation about Islamic Finance by Professor Chazi followed by Q&A and lastly a short debate and workshop about marketing. All with all a very fruitful and informative day that left all participants with a very satisfied feeling about the day.





In the evening all participants were treated on a wonderful evening at the premises of the Al Qasr Hotel. We had drinks at the Koubah Bar with a wonderful view on the amazing Burj Al Arab, after which we had boat tour through the canals of Venice to continue our evening with a gala dinner at the "Magnolia". An amazing place with a beautiful atmosphere to spend the evening with such nice colleagues and friends. Not all, but some of us have enjoyed the nightclub Madinat Jumeirah, part of the Al Qasr Hotel. Also, great!

On Saturday the members' meeting was held. Apart from the usual programme, we were treated with a nice teaser for the Spring conference to be held in Paris in May 2015. Later, the IPG-chairman Friedhelm Gruber surprised the participants with the announcement to step down. More about this can be found in the other articles in this newsletter.



The afternoon was reserved for a trip to the old part of the city, of which not much is visible anymore. Nevertheless still interesting especially the boat trip on Dubai Creek on the traditional "abra's" and the walk through the gold and diamond areas.



The final dinner was at the Al Hadheerah Desert Restaurant which was the best place to experience traditional fare amid rolling sand dunes. The decor recreated the magic on an ancient fort, with natural stones, rock walls, and a sunken seating area. The mood of old Arabia is captured through the entertainment of belly dancers, henna artists and falcon displays. This evening completed a very special and exceptionally well organised conference in Dubai. We all owe the organisers a very warm thank you for such a wonderful event! So: thank you Tansy, Constanza, Michael, Willem and Hannes!



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Europe



## Thank you Friedhelm

Article by **Francesca Falbo**

**With great pleasure I was appointed to write some words in order to thank our colleague Friedhelm Gruber for all the years spent by him in managing our group as Chairman.**

As the members that attended the Conference in Dubai already know, during the General Assembly that took place on Saturday morning Friedhelm suddenly decided to resign from his role of Chairman of the group, one year earlier than expected.

Because the surprise that we all experienced in the moment in which he informed us about his decision, we were probably not able to express immediately our feelings of gratitude for all what Friedhelm has done in the time he served as Chairman of the group.

I think all of us remember the passion and the full commitment he put in the role he was appointed for. As member of the Board of Directors, I can say that all his actions and efforts were always aimed to help the group in growing, both in the number of members and also in the quality of the services that the group can offer.

Friedhelm, in the past years was able to change "the face" of IPG in a very delicate moment, the moment in which we were developing and growing as a group and, consequently, we were facing the need to change rules and structure. In that crucial moment, in which things were sometimes difficult, the passion, the strength and the professionalism of Friedhelm were able to help all of us in becoming an organized and structured group with roles, rules and with an organized range of services that all the members can experience and enjoy.



For all these reasons, I think that we all should be grateful to him and always remember that he contributed in an indelible and unforgettable manner to make the group a place in which members can both enjoy the company of old friends but, particularly, a place in which more than 110 firms based all over the world can exchange business opportunities working together in a spirit of mutual cooperation and understanding, no matter from where they come from and with no regards with borders of whatsoever nature.

The mark of Friedhelm and of all what he did will accompany us in all the challenges and experience we are going to face in the future, hoping that he will never stop to actively participate in the life of our group.

Thank you Friedhelm and...see you all in Paris!



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## Next Conference

### Paris- France

START:  
Thursday 7th may 2015 END:  
Sunday 10th may 2015

### Rome - Italy

START:  
Thursday 15th Oct 2015  
END:  
Sunday 18th Oct 2015

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## Agenda

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## Paris conference! Early registration required!

Please write an email to [Aylin Redondo](#) if you have not received the invitation for the 2015 spring conference which will take place from 7 - 10 May, 2015 in Paris. **DUE TO THE LIMITED NUMBER OF HOTEL ROOMS AVAILABLE, EARLY REGISTRATION IS ESSENTIAL** . All bookings must be sent to the following e-mail address: [ipg-paris2015@avexia.fr](mailto:ipg-paris2015@avexia.fr) before 31st January 2015. If there are any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs. Marianne KARLIN-BERNARD (Avexia Voyages) and her team +33 1.49.40.50.39 (or.24.27 /or 50.45) from 09:30 am to 6:30 pm.

We are looking forward to a very successful 2015, IPG Spring Conference and meeting you all in Paris!



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