

Year-end Review 2014

It never ceases to amaze me when I look back at the close of the year and realize just how much ground we've covered as an integrated network and just how far we've come since the previous year. 2014 was no exception – we closed the year on a very high note.


Having hosted two summit conferences (Houston, Texas (first time in 13 years in the USA) and Tokyo), with a combined attendance of over 50 countries and welcomed many of our legacy clients; and having broken new ground by associating with Thomson Reuters' Practical Law and attended for the first time the Association of Corporate Counsel (America's largest gathering of General Counsel), FLI HQ never rested.

It is nothing short of remarkable to hear testimonials after testimonials how pleased FLI and FLI NET clients are with the competent, timely and cost-effective delivery of legal services around the globe. There is no doubt in their minds that the stamp of quality, which FLI ensures as a brand is now an established household name, for which we have all our FLI NET Partners to thank.

With the strategic move to bring Pete Larsen to spearhead from his Houston-base FLI business development in the Americas, FLI's future for 2015 and onwards looks very bright. Pete and I are currently evaluating other seasoned General Counsel who might be invited to join and help us continue to promote our success story to more multinational clients.

I would only be remised if I did not acknowledge the tremendous support I receive all the time from the impressive Advisory Board. This remarkable group of successful and very busy lawyers fulfil a very important role for the well-being of the network as a whole (in addition to my own personal sanity when things approach overwhelming levels of time and attention), and I know I speak for every FLI NET Partner when I say that we thank you and salute you.

And while there is much yet to do, this is our time and we have every intention to continue on our successful path and achieve greater heights this year. Exciting times ahead!


Orlando Casares, FLI Principal

FLI NET GROWTH

NEW FLI MEMBER FIRMS

Through continuous efforts from our FLI Head Office in Belgium and the instrumental contributions from the entire FLI NET Board Team, FLI was pleased to welcome two new FLI NET Partners from various strategic regions:

- Chile **Prieto & Cia** www.prieto.cl
- Albania **Haxhia & Hajdari** www.lawfirmh-h.com.al



And the following countries at various stages of affiliation, which are expected to be accepted by FLI Board in due course:

- **Ireland, Denmark, Mexico, Nigeria,**
- **Morocco, South Africa, Costa Rica,**
- **Paraguay, Peru, Egypt, Pakistan.**

NEW FLI PARTNER



Ensuring FLI's core team to remain competent in managing our global network, FLI was pleased to welcome **Mr. Pete Larsen** in the capacity of Partner. Having formerly worked as the Associated General Counsel of Situs, and a client of FLI for a couple of years, Mr. Larsen is based in Houston and heads FLI NET business development efforts and project management throughout the Americas.

Mr. Larsen brings more than ten years of experience in real estate law, title, mortgage law, commercial leasing, business law and litigation related to residential, multi-family and commercial real estate and has more than 10 years of business management experience prior to attending law school.

With his language abilities, fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, Mr. Larsen now plays an instrumental role in the development of the US market as well as LATAM.

NEW FLI BOARD MEMBERS

Fulfilling a critical role in managing the consistently growing network, FLI was pleased to welcome **Mr. J Cary Gray** from Gray Reed & McGraw (www.grayreed.com) to serve as the member of FLI NET Board. Mr. Gray is the President and Managing Director of Gray Reed & McGraw (FLI's impressive host for FLI Spring Conference, 2014). As a commercial litigator, he has secured favorable verdicts and judgments in the United States, as well as throughout the world, in a wide variety of commercial litigation cases including breach of fiduciary duty, collections, deceptive trade practices, defamation, employment discrimination, fraud, fraudulent transfer, negligence, professional (accounting and legal) malpractice, real estate titles, shareholder oppression and shareholder derivative actions, wrongful death and enforcement of contracts. His rich experience and vision for a stronger FLI would, most definitely, enrich the Board's make-up.





FLI Board was also pleased to welcome **Ms. Bonnie Dixon**, as the newest member of the Board representing Japan's Mr. Hiroo Atsumi. When Ms. Dixon joined Atsumi & Sakai she became the first non-Japanese attorney to become a partner of a domestic Japanese law firm, pursuant to legislation that for the first time allowed law partnerships between Japanese lawyers and lawyers licensed elsewhere. Bonnie Dixon is licensed to practice law in the State of New York and is registered in Japan as a Foreign Registered Lawyer. She has extensive experience in international transactions, cross border labor and employment, cross-border litigation, structured finance, banking transactions, investment funds, etc. Ms. Dixon speaks fluent Japanese and has worked in Tokyo for more than fifteen years in the aggregate.

With these new changes, at the end of 2014 the FLI NET Board was composed as follows:

Klaus Jankowski (Germany)

Mira Sun (Rep. of South Korea)

Vitor Marques da Cruz (Angola)

Willem Heemskerk (The Netherlands)

Mohamed Alem (Lebanon)

David Hamlett (United Kingdom)

Krishan Malhotra (India)

Cary Gray (USA)

Bonnie Dixon (Japan)

PANEL EXPANSION

In order to better serve the growing needs of FLI's clients, FLI's Executive Board adopted a directive during our Spring Conference in Berlin to structure a panel of law firms approach (rather than FLI's unique model since its inception of one leading law firm per country) in markets which due to inherent local complexities, the vast expanse of the local market, level of sophistication and/or need for cutting edge competency, FLI already hosts panel structures in the UK and USA.

FLI was pleased to welcome the following panel firm(s):

- Russia **Muranov Chernyakov & Partners**
- Japan TBA

FLI NET PARTNER CONFERENCES & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REGIONAL EVENTS

FLI NET ANNUAL SPRING CONFERENCE

In May FLI NET partners gathered in **Houston, USA (May 9 – 11)** to be part of a spectacular **Annual Spring Conference**. This event was superbly organized by our gracious hosts of **Gray Reed & McGraw** who put an unforgettable conference. To see FLI NET Partners flying in from approximately 40 countries including 2 new partners (*who joined FLI since the 2013 Hague conference*) from Albania and Chile, as well as two VIP guests from auditing firms from Ireland and Mexico, and half a dozen of FLI's multinational clients, along with attendees from Legal500 and Thomson Reuters was a very satisfying experience for all in attendance.



ASSOCIATION OF CORPORATE COUNSEL



For the first time in its history, FLI was invited to attend as a sponsor at the annual **ACC Conference in New Orleans (Oct 28 – 31)**, which has proven to be a perfect stage to showcase FLI's business model to numerous multi-national companies. Supported by the partners from the UK (Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co.) and US (Gray Reed & McGraw), as well as by three prospective South American firms from Costa Rica, Paraguay, and Peru, FLI Principal, Orlando Casares and US-based partner, Pete Larsen spent three intense days tirelessly sharing FLI story with the world. Reinforcing FLI's international scope of expertise, FLI was also invited to participate as a

speaker in the "Transnational Enforcement of International Arbitral Awards and Foreign Judgments" pane. The honor was bestowed on Mr. Tom Price (Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co.) who represented FLI & WLG well through his insightful presentation.

Numerous in-house counsel were interested in learning about FLI's unique value proposition, global coverage, international expertise, and strength of Practice Groups.



FLI NET FALL REGIONAL CONFERENCE

In keeping with tradition, FLI convened its traditional **Fall Regional Conference** on **November 13 – 14 in Tokyo, Japan**. FLI NET Partners from all over Asia (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, and the host partners – Japan) joined FLI Principal, Orlando Casares, along with FLI US-based Partner – Pete Larsen. As an added value, FLI NET partners held individual break-out sessions with US multinational companies during which the partners provided feedback to clients' burning questions pertaining their business in Asia. The conference's host partner firm – **Atsumi & Sakai** – had also invited a number of their clients not only for meet & greet purposes, but to be part of two very insightful discussions on "Risk Management in Relation to Inbound/Outbound Investments" (chaired by Mr. Sanbe Hiroyuki, Partner, Atsumi & Sakai) and "Awareness to Compliance Issues in Cross-Border Projects" (chaired by all present FLI NET Partners).

For the gala dinner, FLI NET Partners were hosted to a typical Japanese dinner at Gonpachi.

Overall, the FLI NET 2014 Fall Regional Conference lived up to its expectations and proved to be an excellent way of closing out 2014 FLI NET events.



FLI NET PRACTICE GROUPS

After organizing FLI NET's global diverse competencies into Practice Groups to provide multinational clients with an integrated platforms of service providers, three Practice Groups (Life Sciences, Data Protection, and Energy) hit the ground running in 2014. The respective Heads of Practice Groups took initiatives organizing regular group calls to forge the relationships among group members and build strong knowledge-sharing environment, while aiming for business opportunities. During the first quarter of 2014, all PGs held group calls, followed by physical break-out sessions during the annual spring conference. Respective marketing materials were developed together with FLI Head Office in Brussels, which will be used in joined group pitches.



CROSS-BORDER MANDATES

FLI's efforts in providing its valued Partners opportunities to support the network's multinational clients, a number of cross-border mandates (whether brand new or continuous engagements) were secured:

World-wide telecommunication project (Fortune 100 US multinational company)

- **8 countries** – Greece, Israel, Turkmenistan, Nigeria, PNG, Republic of South Korea, Indonesia, India

Liabilities of terminating local Distributor (Fortune 500 US multinational company)

- **32 countries** – Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Russia, Oman, South Africa, Jordan, Romania, Tunisia, Italy, UAE, Indonesia, UK, Bahrain, Syria, Malta, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine

Reviewing of Life Sciences Collateral Marketing Material (Fortune 500 US multinational company)

- **8 countries** – Belgium, France, UK, Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain, Denmark

Ceasing production of counterfeiting goods (Leading EU manufacturer of commercial vehicles lights)

- **8 countries** – Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine

Updating "in-Country Guidebooks" for subsidiary officers and directors (Diversified chemical and life sciences technology & manufacturing company)

- **23 countries** – Australia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, India, Taiwan, Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, UK, Russia, Turkey, Finland, UAE.

Drafting "in-Country Guidebooks" for subsidiary officers and directors (Diversified chemical and life sciences technology & manufacturing company)

- **6 countries** – Chile, Brazil, Bermuda, Mexico, Argentina, Canada

Multi-jurisdictional Acquisition (Leading valves' production company)

- **4 countries** – South Africa, India, UK, USA

Corporate and Litigation support (One of the leaders in commercial cleaning services industry)

- **3 countries** – Belgium, France, UK

All FLI NET Partners involved in these projects delivered (or are still delivering) outstanding results and provided the needed solutions in a timely and cost-effective manner. On some projects, FLI's clients particularly appreciated the added value provided by FLI Head Office in ensuring smooth completion of transactions.

RANKING / STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS

CHAMBERS & PARTNERS

Understanding the importance in our industry of being recognized as top tier by a duly accredited organization, FLI has maintained its leading network ranking since Chambers started ranking networks, and most recently as only one of the very few **Chambers Elite** Global Leading Networks (second consecutive year).

Having demonstrated stellar performance with successful management of global projects, Chambers Global, after conducting extensive interviews with FLI clients and some partners, has selected First Law International once again as one of the 'go to legal networks,' and asked Mr. Casares to draft the Overview to the 2015 Guide, for the fifth consecutive year.

Each FLI NET member should take great pride knowing that your individual stand-alone top rankings have contributed to achieve such favorable recognition, which we will aim to keep up in 2015 (and beyond).



THOMSON REUTERS/PRACTICAL LAW

Early spring, FLI took a bold step and secured a strategic relationship with Practical Law (Thomson Reuters' Legal Solution). This one-of-a-kind opportunity presents a significant boost to the network as it will help build greater awareness and prestige of FLI NET Partners across the globe.

Practical Law

In taking this relationship a step further, FLI HQ and Practical Law agreed to publish an "**Investing in [my country]** multi-jurisdictional guide" by 20 FLI NET members. The Guide will be launched in Q:1 and will be introduced to about 40,000 PL's subscribers, in-house professional.

REGULATORY & COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATION TRAINING

As multi-national companies are keen that their legal service providers are up-to-speed on various compliance and regulatory matters and to demonstrate that FLI network's firms have proper knowledge on the subject, FLI Head Office has implementing a **Best Ethical Practices and Compliance Training**.

Considerable amount of efforts has been exerted in relation to that initiative and we're glad to report that the first wave of FLI NET Partners from the below countries has been already certified:

Angola; Congo; Tanzania; Kenya; Algeria; India; Malaysia; Mozambique; Philippines; DRC; Argentina; and Chile (part I completed).

FLI will continue driving this initiative forward and a number of FLI NET Partners are already scheduled to undergo this training in Q:1 2015.



FLI NET HONORS & ACCOLADES

FLI NET Chinese member firm – **Dacheng Law Offices** – has been chosen as the Client Choice winner of the 2014 Corporate Intl Magazine Global Award: '**Competition Law Firm of the Year in China.**'

FLI NET Turkey – **Birsel Law Offices** – has been chosen as the Client Choice winner of the 2014 Corporate Intl Magazine Global Award: '**Full Service Law Firm of the Year.**'

FLI NET Malaysia - **Azmi & Associates** (emeritus FLI NET Board member) has been selected by Asian Legal Business as:

- 2014 Malaysian Law Firm of the Year!
- 2014 Corporate Social Responsibility Law Firm of the Year

FLI NET Hungarian Partner - **Oppenheim** - has been selected by Chambers & Partners - the prestigious independent legal ranking agency - as the National Law Firm of the year in Hungary!

A number of Oppenheim's practice groups and its individual lawyers have also received very high rankings by the agency in its Chambers Europe 2014 review, including Banking & Finance, Competition/Antitrust (Band 1), Corporate/M&A, Dispute Resolution (Band 1), Employment, Intellectual Property as well as Projects and Energy.

FLI NET Lebanese Partner Firm, **Alem & Associates** (member of the FLI NET Board), received its license as a Saudi partnership, a premier for a regional law firm.

Alem & Associates' presence in Saudi Arabia dates back to 2008 through the Firm's association with the reputable lawyer, Sattam Attayyar. The parties have now formally established their partnership under local laws making Alem & Associates, along with only one other international firm, a fully licensed law firm providing a wide range of legal services in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi firm will be led by senior partner, Omar El Assir, who has been a remarkably successful and praised legal expert in the region.

FLI NET French Partner - **Lamy Lexel** (one of the founding Partners and currently serving on FLI Emeritus Board) has been ranked as "Excellent" for its practice in capital development; and "Highly Notorious" for its practice with LBO funds by Leaders League (Decideurs Strategie Finance Droit Guide).

FLI NET Argentinian Partner, **Zang Bergel & Viñes** was recognized by Chambers & Partners and Latin Lawyer 250 as the preeminent Buenos Aires-based firm in Real Estate, and a leading firm in Banking & Finance, M&A, TMT and IP. The firm is also listed in the IFLR1000 ranking in Corporate/M&A and Banking & Capital Markets, and in the Legal 500 Latin American Guide in Real Estate and Banking.

In addition, for the past five consecutive years, ZBV has been listed among the top 25 law firms in Argentina by business magazine Apertura, which publishes the most representative peer-review ranking in the country. The same publication recognizes Saúl Zang as one of the 10 most influential lawyers in Argentina and Carolina Zang as one of the outstanding lawyers under 40 years old.

FLI NET Belarus Partner, Ms. **Ekaterina Zabello** (from Vlasova Mikhel & Partners) has been recognized by 2014 Best Lawyers edition as the Lawyer of the Year for excellence in her respective practice area.

FLI NET Ukraine partner firm - **Konnov & Sozanovsky** – has been recognized as one of the top five Ukrainian law firms in the fields of:

- Intellectual property; and
- Media

The results were announced by the publishing house "Legal Practice" through a thorough annual survey.

FLI NET UK Partner, Wragge & Co., completed its merger to equally iconic London law firm, Lawrence Graham & Co. The merger propelled the newly created firm, **Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co.** to one UK's 20 biggest firms, with 770 lawyers across all their offices. With top-tier practices in real estate, equity capital markets, investment funds, private capital, IP, pensions, and construction, Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co. provides a solid platform of providing high range of services to all its local and international clients.

