

INTRODUCTION

From February 23 through March 3, 2002, an International Legal Exchange (ILEX) delegation of members of the ABA's Section of International Law and Practice visited the Central America countries of Guatemala and Costa Rica to learn about issues facing the legal and business communities in the region. Distinguished lawyers from both countries formed local planning committees to structure the delegation's visit. The planning committees organized presentations for the delegation that were given by local leaders in business, private legal practice, academia, the judicial branch and human rights. Summarized below are the notes taken at the various meetings by members of the delegation. The goal of the note-takers was to capture issues of significance to the Central American presenters and to convey them to the ABA membership in the United States. This report was not intended to cover each topic in its entirety; some issues may be omitted or only addressed in a cursory fashion. This report ends with a brief summary of proposed follow-up action for discussion amongst the members of the Section of International Law and Practice and the ABA at large.

ILEX was established by the ABA House of Delegates in 1968 and incorporated into the Goal VIII activities of the Section of International Law in 1969, the year that the U.S. Department of State officially recognized the ABA as a sponsor of its Exchange Visitor program. Created under the proposition that a worldwide exchange of ideas and programs will lead to a heightened level of learning and understanding, the program's components are:

- **Outbound-Country Briefing Trips for ABA Delegations:** The International Legal Exchange Program (ILEX) arranges an annual outbound briefing trip for ABA and Section legal professionals who are interested in exchanging ideas with lawyers in other countries. These visits provide participants with first-hand knowledge of the legal and judicial systems of the particular host country or region. The trips also provide a unique opportunity for delegation members to interact with legal, business, and governmental leaders of the countries visited and to develop personal and professional contacts throughout the world. ILEX organizes these trips in coordination with the government or bar association of the host country, specifically drawing on the expertise of Section members. To date, ILEX has arranged 30 outbound trips to approximately 45 countries from Argentina to Zimbabwe. Recent delegations traveled to the Middle East (Lebanon, Syria and Iran) and Brazil.
- **Inbound- Orientations on U.S. Laws and Institutions for Foreign Lawyers and Judges:** ILEX arranges programs and meetings for prominent foreign lawyers, judges and scholars with legal professionals visiting the U.S. to become better acquainted with the U.S. legal system.
- **J-1 Visas for Visiting Foreign Lawyers:** ABA assists members and foreign lawyers who have been offered training by a foreign law firm or legal office. Via an external contractor, the Section certifies eligibility for exchange visitor status, thereby facilitating foreign lawyers' entry into the U.S. Since September 1998, the Section's ILEX program has processed approximately 545 visas.

