



SIPAC'S
Stunning Shanghai Debut Event Sets
a New Standard for Cross-border
Legal Cooperation for the Next Wave
of China Globalization

Report On First Annual
SINO-INTERNATIONAL LAW FORUM
W Hotel, North Bund, Shanghai

16-17 November 2023



The Sino-International Professional Advisory Council (SIPAC): Setting a New Standard for Cross-border Legal Cooperation

Nearly 250 top lawyers from across China and around the world convened in Shanghai in November 2023 for the inaugural Sino-International Law Forum, sponsored by the Sino-International Professional Advisory Council (SIPAC), which is a global network of leading independent law firms around the world built to service all legal aspects of the expanding international operations of Chinese enterprises. This was the first major international legal event in China in the post-covid era, and there was a tangible energy at the forum as leading Chinese lawyers were able to engage in person with their counterparts from Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Western Europe, MENA, Africa and the Americas.



SIPAC was formally launched in March of 2023 when the initial group of founding member firms came on board, but active promotion of the SIPAC platform in the China market only commenced more recently in the few months leading up to the Sino-International Law Forum. The response to the initial introduction of SIPAC to the market was met with universal acclaim by Chinese lawyers involved in cross-border legal matters. Comments from lawyers around the country hailed the new network as “a great idea”, another “meaningful” contribution to the Chinese legal profession which “will provide a helpful platform for lawyers to find professionals in other jurisdictions.”

As a result, anticipation for the SIPAC forum among in-house and law firm lawyers across China was very high, and the initial event did not disappoint. Attendees included more than 40 senior lawyers from leading independent law firms covering more than 50 countries together with nearly 100 senior in-house legal and compliance professionals from top Chinese companies as well as leading practitioners from prominent Red Circle law firms and others from the Ministry of Justice List of Top 1000 Cross-border Lawyers from more than a dozen key cities across China.





40

More than 40 foreign lawyers from firms covering more than 50 countries



100

Nearly 100 senior in-house legal/compliance professionals from top Chinese companies



1000

Selected practitioners from prominent Red Circle law firms and other MOJ Top 1000 Cross-border Lawyers

开幕主题演讲 Opening Address

中资跨国企业面临的
日益增加的国际法律风险

Addressing International
China's Global

首届思百库SIPAC
国际法律交流合作论坛

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国际法律交流合作论坛

First Annual
Sino-International
Law Forum

GUO JUNXIU

China Eastern Airlines
GC and CCO

China Eastern Airlines GC and CCO, Guo Junxiu, who was a keynote speaker on the first day of the event, praised the conference as “the best international legal conference in China in more than 10 years, if not longer,” noting that it was unprecedented to see so many foreign lawyers together in one place in China. This was extremely valuable for Chinese companies with international operations, Guo said, who have a continuing need to identify trusted legal counsel in an increasing number of jurisdictions around the world.

This sentiment was echoed by all other in-house lawyers who registered for and attended the event, which included senior

in-house representatives of such prominent companies as Lenovo, Syngenta (owned by Sinochem), Nio, Geely, BYD, China FAW, YMT, Inspur, TCL, Hisense, Alibaba DAMO Academy (Alibaba R&D), Cai Niao (formerly Alibaba Logistics), Chint Group, Boke Games, BangBang Robot, Instig, China Investment Corporation, Silk Road Fund, Pudong Development Bank, China Minsheng Bank, China Taiping Assets, Southern Power Grid International, China Electronics, China Construction, China Merchants Port Group, Harbin Pharmaceutical, Sinopec, Weichai (China) Investment, Longyi Green Energy, Green Technology Bank, Tongwei Solar, Avita, 3Peak, etc.



The forum provided the perfect platform for these leading in-house lawyers to connect directly with top foreign lawyers from around the world, and all attendees took advantage of the unique networking opportunities presented by the conference. It was common for in-house counsel to come with a target list of firms they wanted to meet with, a trend that continued after the conference concluded, resulting in scores of quality referrals to participating law firms from around the world.

At the same time, the foreign lawyer delegates had their own lists of target in-house contacts, and as one foreign lawyer noted, in many cases, the Chinese side pro-actively sought him out even before he had a chance to find them. "It's a lawyer's dream," he said. This was a common refrain among the foreign lawyers as it became evident that there was a strong pent-up demand from the Chinese side to reach out to their foreign counterparts to help service their growing international legal requirements.

Who was there – leading Chinese companies





The participants from Chinese law firms formed the third critical cohort of participants in the Sino-International Law Forum. Chinese law firms now increasingly take the role of lead counsel on cross-border trade and investment matters as well as in respect of international legal disputes involving Chinese parties, which is the natural next stage in the development of the Chinese legal profession, and which also aligns with the Chinese government policy preference to elevate the role of Chinese professionals on behalf of Chinese enterprises as they continue their global expansion.

As such, the Chinese law firms are critical conduits for their Chinese clients which have international business operations.

Like their in-house clients and colleagues, the Chinese law firm lawyers at the forum similarly displayed exceptional enthusiasm for the opportunity to interact directly with top lawyers from around the world. Julia Zhang, a partner at Red Circle firm Haiwen & Partners, who chaired the ESG panel discussion, lauded the event as “fantastic,” which she indicated was the universal assessment of everyone in attendance.

Who was there – leading Chinese law firms



The Shanghai office of Junhe hosted the pre-event opening reception on the evening of 15 November with nearly 20 senior partners of the firm in attendance to meet with the visiting foreign lawyers, which several of the Junhe partners reported was un-herd of in the firm. One international partner of the firm noted that he had tried to organize a similar meet-and-greet for foreign lawyers a few years back but was unable to generate much of a response within the firm, a situation which is not uncommon in many top Chinese firms

Other leading local law firms that stepped up to participate and sponsor the forum included fellow Red Circle law firms King & Wood Mallesons and Zhong Lun as well as leading boutique cross-border firm Chance Bridge and LongAn, together with Shenzhen-based China Commercial Law Firm, which hosted the closing reception. Other law firm attendees included senior lawyers from Jingtian & Gongcheng, AllBright, Grandall, Dacheng, Duan & Duan, Leadvisor (spin-off from EY Law), Jade & Fountain, Yingke, East & Concord Partners, among many others.



For all of the attendees on the Chinese side, the foreign lawyers were clearly the main attraction, and this demonstrated and confirmed the SIPAC value proposition, which is that by aggregating top China Desks from leading independent law firm around the world on a single platform, the cumulative value and impact in the China

market is compounded exponentially. By ensuring that only top law firms are invited onto the platform, SIPAC is able to earn the trust and confidence of the entire China legal market as the go-to single point of contact for their international legal service needs of the profession over the years.

Participating foreign law firms included initial SIPAC founding members Al Tamimi & Co. (MENA region), Tilleke & Gibbins (ASEAN region), Schellenberg Wittmer (Switzerland), Heuking Kuhn (Germany), ENSAfrica (Sub-Saharan Africa region), Anderson Mori & Tomotsune (Japan), Marval O'Farrell Mairal (Argentina), Carey Abogados (Chile), Waselius & Wist (Finland), Cruz Marcelo & Tenefracia (Philippines), Moroglu Arseven (Turkey) and GZG & Associates (Cyprus).

Other top quality law firms which were invited to join the inaugural SIPAC event included Fasken (Canada), Wolf Theiss (CEE region), Lakatos Koves (Hungary), Riad & Riad (Egypt), Soemadiprdja & Taher (Indonesia), Abreau (Portugal), ALRUD (Russia), Buren (Netherlands), Bichara Advogados (Brazil) together with Peters & Peters (UK disputes heavyweight), Pinsent Masons, and McDermott Will & Emery. Other key international legal industry partners for the event included Dow Jones Risk & Compliance, Wolters Kluwer and Lexology.

Who was there – SIPAC members & invited foreign guests

التاميمي و شركاه
AL TAMIMI & CO.

**PETERS &
PETERS**

ANDERSON
MORI &
TOMOTSUNE

**Schellenberg
Wittmer**

WOLF THEISS /Carey



Abreu:
advogados

George Z. Georgiou & Associates LLC
Lawyers, Arbitrators & Legal Consultants

HEUKING KÜHN LÜER WOJTEK

Riad & Riad
LAW FIRM



Soemadipradja & Taher

Tilleke & Gibbins

BUREN
LEGAL | TAX | NOTARY

FASKEN

Bichara
ADVOGADOS

**McDermott
Will & Emery**

**MARVAL
O'FARRELL
MAIRAL**

MORAIS LEITÃO
GALVÃO TELES, SOARES DA SILVA
& ASSOCIADOS

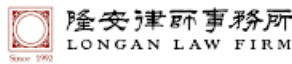
WASELIUS & WIST

**MOROĞLU
ARSEVEN**





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A common refrain from participating Chinese in-house and law firm lawyers was that Robert's role as SIPAC co founder was a key reason for their level of trust and confidence in the SIPAC platform.

The key to SIPAC's success is that together Robert and the SIPAC team have direct contacts and working relationships with top law firms in more than 100 countries. This is a resource which no one else in the Chinese legal profession can duplicate, and because SIPAC is designed to serve all players in the entire Chinese legal market, this platform belongs to all and thus is not proprietary to any single Chinese law firm. Moreover, in order to eliminate all potential friction in the process of making cross-border introductions, SIPAC provides professional referrals anywhere in the world without charge to the Chinese in-house and law firm user.

All of these elements were on full display at the inaugural Sino-International Law Forum, and by drawing on the assembled legal talent from inside and outside China, the forum was able to provide international quality presentations on timely topics pertinent to Chinese GCs/CCOs and Chinese cross-border transactions and disputes in the evolving geopolitical environment. Many participants from inside and outside China all commented on how "on point" the topics and presenters were, reflecting a deep understanding of actual conditions impacting Chinese companies and their legal counsel.

All of the participating foreign firms were hand-picked by SIPAC founders Robert Lewis and the SIPAC team. Robert has worked in leading US, UK and Chinese law firms in China for more than 30 years, and is well known in the China legal services market for his work in training and know-how for Chinese lawyers in respect of cross-border contract drafting and negotiations and transaction management and has generated significant good will in the Chinese legal profession.

AGENDA

Thursday 16 November



The role of the China General Counsel in a changing geopolitical environment

At this inaugural China GC Roundtable event, GCs and CCOs had the opportunity to share experiences and advice on how to optimize their strategic and tactical roles to maximize the success of their businesses. Only invited GCs and CCOs, SIPAC founding members, and select non-member and Chinese law firm guests could attend.

Friday 17 November



Connecting China's legal profession with top lawyers around the world

At this inaugural SIPAC Day, Chinese GCs, in-house, and law firm lawyers could meet renowned lawyers from over 50 countries and territories, enabling them to broaden their international connections and learn how to address critical legal issues across multiple and industries and regions.



The main forum was divided into two days. The first day focused on the unique and challenging role of the Chinese GC/CCO and featured a presentation by Harvard Law School professor Scott Westfahl, who joined from Cambridge, Massachusetts by video. Other presentations included discussions by leading GCs and CCOs on how to optimize their strategic and tactical roles to maximize the success of the business. Day two focused on interactions between the foreign lawyer delegates and their domestic counterparts across a range of industry and practice area specialisms topics. The level of interest among participants was so high that the numbers of attendees held strong through the end of the afternoon of the second day with no drop off.

The quality of the participants and content was matched by the high standard of the event venue and quality of the event production. The W Hotel provided a striking venue and the combined event production team led by Lanqi Legal Affairs and the SIPAC China team created a “wow” impact with every detail of the event presentation, meeting or exceeding the highest standards for events anywhere in the world. On the dinner cruise on the Huangpu River at the conclusion of the first full day of the conference, one prominent foreign delegate remarked that he had been trying to identify a flaw in the program, but to that point had not been able to find a single one, a fitting tribute to the stellar work of the event team.





SIPAC also expresses sincere gratitude to the Justice Bureau for the Hongkou District of Shanghai Municipality, the Shanghai Corporate Counsel Association, the Shenzhen Corporate Counsel Association, the Shanghai Arbitration Commission, docQbot (bilingual international legal knowhow database co-founded by Robert Lewis) and the China Going Global Think-tank (CGGT) (exclusive think-tank partner for the forum with 60,000 followers on its public WeChat channel, also co-founded by Robert Lewis) for their strong support. With the recent renewed emphasis on the part of China's central government on the critical role of the rule of law and the further development of international cooperation in connection with the continued globalization of Chinese business, Shanghai will play a

key role, and so holding the inaugural Sino-International Law Forum in Shanghai aligns SIPAC's global legal resources with Shanghai's leading position as China's most internationalized city. Looking forward, SIPAC anticipates that given the market response to this initial event, next year should see a two-fold increase in the number and quality of the participants in the second annual event to be held in November 2024, with another doubling in 2025, establishing SIPAC as the unrivaled international legal conference in China going forward.

This is also the expectation that the Chinese legal profession has for SIPAC. One Red Circle firm partner who attended the event paid this tribute to SIPAC's achievements in the few short months following its establishment.



SIPAC has provided an exceptional platform for Chinese lawyers to connect with their counterparts from around the globe. The Forum stands as a premier event, featuring esteemed speakers who delved into the most pertinent and advanced areas and topics in the forefront of legal practice relating to China. While SIPAC was initially unfamiliar to me, it has undeniably demonstrated its competence and determination to establish a significant presence in China's legal market, catering to the needs of legal professionals.

At SIPAC, this is both our ambition as well as our mission. We look forward to working with more top independent law firms as well as other leading professional organization partners to join us for future events!