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Founded in 1873 in Brussels, the ILA has played a key role in drafting treaties, guidelines, policies, and commentaries in such areas as human rights, environmental law, arbitration, antitrust, family law and adoption, commercial and trade law (including economic sanctions), law of the sea, offshore resource claims, boundary and other dispute settlement, the use of armed force, and a host of others.

The ILA has 66 national and regional chapters, over 5,000 members and 19 active committees across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. It meets every two years to complete negotiated texts, adopt formal reports, and engage in robust debate among its diverse constituencies. Recent biennial conferences have been held in The Hague (2010), Sofia (2012), Washington D.C. (2014), Johannesburg (2016), Sydney (2018), Japan (2020), Portugal (2022), and Athens (2024). The next Biennial will be held in Vienna (2026). Practitioners and scholars rely heavily on reports and other documents drafted by the ILA and its branches.

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American Branch, ILA

The American Branch (ABILA), founded in 1922, is among the ILA's largest and most active branches. ABILA hosted the 2014 Washington ILA Biennial Conference jointly with the American Society of International Law. That meeting attracted some 1,700 registrants—one of the largest gatherings of international lawyers and experts ever. ABILA Membership offers unique networking opportunities by involving you directly in an international forum for practitioners, academics, diplomats, government officials, and non-governmental organizations.

ABILA members participate in the work of the Branch's substantive committees, which issue reports, amicus briefs, and letters to Congress, federal agencies, the United Nations, and other international institutions and officials on key issues.

International Law Weekend is an annual two-and-a-half day conference held in New York City. The Branch also sponsors regional conferences such as ILW West, ILW Midwest, and ILW South.

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Participating in Branch committees offers members opportunities to become involved directly in exciting and cutting-edge issues of international law. The Branch's 20 committees currently cover such topics as international trade and commercial law, international human rights, international arbitration and investment, Islamic law, intellectual property, the International Criminal Court, outer space law, the use of armed force, teaching international law, and international humanitarian law. The complete list is available on the Branch website.