This year, I had a great pleasure to participate in a lifetime experience – attendance of 78th ILA Biennial Conference in Sydney as a scholarship holder. For me, a PhD candidate conducting research in international law, it was a true scientific adventure difficult to describe in words. But at least I will try...

Already exciting for me was the moment when I read a message on my acceptance for the Conference. The feeling of being selected for such an important event among dozens of candidates around the world is incomparable to anything else. But the best was yet to come.

When I finally arrived to Sydney on 19th August, I was amazed by the Conference venue. Hotel InterContinental, located in the heart of bustling Sydney was really soaked with ambiance of the city and let a guest to feel really “international” - there was no way then to find a more suitable place for a Conference on international law. I was truly impressed from the first moment of the Conference – a welcome ceremony in one of the hotel's halls with a speech given by The Hon Christian Porter, Attorney-General of Australia was an opportunity to meet Conference participants and exchange interesting ideas at a glass of wine.

Absolutely surprising was an official opening ceremony on August 20th, symbolically organised at the premises of the Parliament of New South Wales. After welcome speeches given by ILA officials, a group a Aboriginal Australians organised a short performance with traditional dance to familiarise audience with customs of indigenous peoples of Australia. Amazing act not to be forgiven.

A great value of the Conference was a large variety of panels to participate in. The coverage of nearly all topics related to international law allowed to choose those that were most interesting for an attendee. I personally, as a researcher dealing mostly with law of aerial terrorism (including questions of use of force in terrorism), attended the following ones:

- Ongoing Challenges for Indigenous Peoples in International Law;
- Outer Space in Contemporary and Future International (Space) Law;
- The Developing Concept of Modern Slavery;
- New Technologies and International Humanitarian Law;
- Use of Force in Challenging Times;
- Engaging with Non-State Actors in International Law;
- Challenges in Refugee Law;
- Space Resources: Legal Framework Discussed;
- The Role of Elected Members on the Security Council in the Pursuit of Justice
As I much enjoy exchange of ideas and encourage asking sometimes controversial questions, I attempted to participate in all discussion session after presentation of panels. It was particularly interesting for me to discuss with speakers concepts of using drones in humanitarian law, threat of space terrorism, domination of political interests in Security Council resolutions, phenomenon of disappearing states etc.

I really appreciate ILA management to let us, scholarship holders, say a few words on our experience with the Conference on the closing ceremony, on August 23rd. I felt honoured to speak before such a great audience and share my ideas with participants.

I may speak about all advantages the Conference featured, but at one I need to focus significantly: people. I was absolutely stunned by the fact that being new to ILA, I made so many new contacts with academia and practitioners dealing with international law all over the world. Brilliant intellect, high professionalism and above all, extreme kindness of all participants were those elements that built the whole atmosphere of the event and made it so unforgettable.

Finally, I would like to invoke what prof. Marie-Claie Cordoner Segger from McGill University said to me after the panel on the Role of Elected Members on the Security Council in the Pursuit of Justice: “You need to be careful, Mateusz. ILA is very addictive”. I must then admit that she was absolutely right. I already feel addicted to ILA. And I would like to sincerely thank the organisers for letting me take participation in this lifetime experience.

Mateusz Osiecki