



Vienna II World Congress BGI

News from Balms Madrid

New Members

CD Rom/Web Page

Next Congress in London

News from Black & Graf

Austria's Federal Act for new founded enterprises

Hong Kong Conflicts Predicted in Unpredictable Years

Argentina and the New Millenium

Bolivia takes concrete steps to guarantee juridical security of foreign investments

Lewin & Wills among the 8 most recommended law firms in Colombia

Interview with UHY Members

Balms Abogados Galicia

# BGI NEWS

Balms Group International An International Association of Independent Lawyers Firms



As you all know the II World Congress of Balms Group International was celebrated last May from the 14th to the 16th in the beautiful city of Vienna

A summary of what happened there is detailed below: On Friday the 14th May the wives of Dr. Neumayer and Mag. Ulrich Walter, Angelika and Ulla respectively who were our hostesses collected us at the Hilton Hotel. The weather was warm and pleasant so we all walked to the offices of

Neumayer & Walter. Once there our Vienna associates showed us round their premises and offered us a welcoming drink. Then the associates from Budapest arrived after having driven all the way, a considerable journey. Then altogether we went to a beautiful Austrian *ÒHeurigerÓ* on the outskirts of Vienna called Schreiberhaus. Dr. Neumayer, our host, briefly welcomed everybody after which we enjoyed a wonderful buffet complemented by Austrian wine, eating drinking and conversing in a very convivial atmosphere.

Then came the actual day of the II World Congress of Balms Group International. It was very early in the morning when we arrived at the beautiful Palais Auersperg. The Congress commenced with speeches from each member firm which were very well received. B.G.I. News would like to take the opportunity of thanking our invited speakers: Dr. Gunther Griehsler, Senate President of the Supreme Court of Vienna and Dr. Robert Walter, Professor of Vienna University. Also special regards were sent to our partners in Colombia, Lewin & Wills Abogados and Hong Kong, W.K. To & Company. We hope that we can all enjoy your attendance next May in London at the III World Congress of B.G.I.

Then the wives of the partners joined us for lunch in one of the wonderful interior patios of the Palace. The lunch was needless to say excellent. The dissemination of technical (video cameras, slide projectors, PC computers) and human resources (executive producers, translators, photographers, secretaries and staff from the Palace) was first rate as was the venue chosen for the event, the Palais Auersperg, which proved a perfect backdrop for the official picture taken with all the members. (see next page).

# BGI NEWS

Balms Group International An International Association of Independent Lawyers Firms

That night after a deserved rest we returned to the Palace to enjoy a marvellous evening. Our friendly hosts and their wives welcomed us one by one and they had attended to every single detail (e.g. the ladies were each offered a fresh red rose). Everybody was extremely elegant (men wearing tuxedos and women evening dresses) and all enjoyed a cocktail before entering the dancehall, a gathering of 350 people



including clients and friends of our associates. The dinner comprised a wide variety of fine cuisine and was enlivened by an orchestra and a jazz band. Our hosts surprised us with an example of a traditional 19th century style Viennese Waltz (see picture). The dancing and talking went on until the early hours when we had a typical «goulash».



The evening ending in the Farewell Waltz. B.G.I. News again wishes to thank Neumayer & Walter together with Angelika and Ulla for the warm welcome and wonderful treat extended to each of the members of B.G.

# BGI NEWS

Balms Group International An International Association of Independent Lawyers Firms



NEWS FROM BALMS MADRID

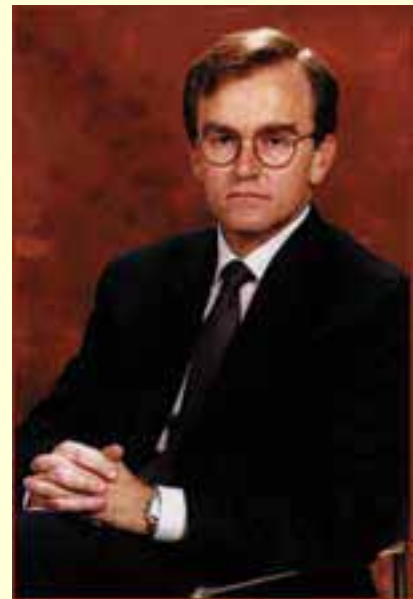
BGI News

Due to expansion, Balms Madrid is moving its central office from the 1st January 2000 (new millenium, new office). The new address is as follows:

C/ General Martinez Campos 42

Also balms Abogados announces the incorporation of a new member D.Eduardo Cortina at the Madrid office and whose profile can be visited at our Web Page.

BGI News would like to express our warmest welcome to a member and a friend.





## NEW MEMBERS

One of the prime objectives of B.G.I. is to expand the Association so as to be able to provide clients with the best service. Ultimately our main aim is to achieve worldwide representation. As was highlighted at the last Congress, in the first 6 months of the year, Balms Abogados has already 4 more offices in the world.

Firstly, Salazar, Salazar y Asociados, a very well known firm in Bolivia introduced by our associates, Siseles, Lichtmann, Indij & Asociados. Salazar, Salazar y Asociados has been appointed an associate to B.G.I. at the beginning of the year. They have offices in La Paz, Santa Cruz de la Sierra and Cochabamba. Also, Balms Abogados has opened a new office in Spain, Balms Abogados Galicia with offices in Vigo.

Unfortunately the proposed office of Balms office in Barcelona has been postponed. Further, you will see from the list of candidates, there are serious proposals from firms which we hope to have as members by the end of this year. They are : Montevideo (Uruguay), Quito (Equador), Dublin (Ireland), Brussels (Belgium) and Munich (Germany) among others. It is my wish to thank everybody in the name of B.G.I. for your efforts and dedication in improving our organisation

<b>BGI Nuevos Candidatos</b>
<b>München (Alemania)</b>
<b>Lisboa (Portugal)</b>
<b>Bruselas (Belgica)</b>
<b>Dublín (Irlanda)</b>
<b>Montpellier (Francia)</b>
<b>Montevideo (Uruguay)</b>
<b>Quito (Ecuador)</b>

Juan Luis Balmaseda de Ahumada  
Balms Group International  
President



CD ROM / WEB PAGE

B.G.I. News would like to take the opportunity to request that all members send us the necessary information to update our new CD Rom Year 2000, i.e. employees that join (and if applicable specializations and CV»s), employees that leave, new pictures of offices, changes of address, fax and telephone numbers, e-mail and any other kind of material we could include (e.g. brochures, logos, letterheads, etc.).

We would also need a little map of your city with your office highlighted upon it along with details and addresses of some nearby well known hotels for visiting clients. Regarding this matter we would like to inform you that from the 1st of November 1999 you could find in your Web Page ([WWW.BALMS.COM](http://WWW.BALMS.COM)) a special section with all the necessary information about the III World Congress B.G.I. which will take place next May in London. The aforesaid information will be updated in the interim.

Appointing you for the following edition, Kind regards,

Ana I. Sampedro Serrano  
Balms Group International  
Secretary



## NEXT CONGRESS IN LONDON

With respect to the next B.G.I. Congress, as you all know it will take place in London, during the 19th, 20th and 21st of May 2000.

The programme in general terms will be as follows:

1.- Venue London Hilton, Park Lane, London W1.  
([www.hilton.com/hotels/LONHITW/index.html](http://www.hilton.com/hotels/LONHITW/index.html))  
Black Graf & Co will host a buffet for the delegates and their wives in the Serpentine Suite at the London Hilton. The scheduled time for this is between 18:30 and 20:30 hours on the Friday evening.



2.- Conference

The Conference itself will start on the Saturday morning. The commencement time is yet to be fixed but 9:30 hours is suggested. The number of delegates expected is thought to be in the region of 30. The Conference will be opened by a short address from either or both the Vice President and the President of B.G.I. We have a guest speaker arranged, namely Ms Adrienne Page, QC, who will give a short talk on a subject of her choice but it is more than likely to be connected with the law of libel in England and/or the role of women in the law in England. Ms Page is the first woman QC to be appointed to the Libel Bar. The Conference will close at approximately 16:00 hours. It will be followed by a Dinner for the delegates and their partners in the Serpentine Suite at the London Hilton. The delegates wives will be entertained during the day by the wives of the partners of Black Graf, the exact form of entertainment is not yet decided but it is likely to incorporate a number of the not so obvious historic attractions in and around London.

3.- Departure

Delegates will depart to their countries on Sunday morning. As you will appreciate our partners from London are still in the planning process and, in due course, a formal invitation to the B.G.I. members will be issued. Among other things, the election of the IV B.G.I. World Congress year 2001 has not been made yet. The candidates are: Buenos Aires, Santa Fe de Bogotá and Hong Kong, following the idea suggested during the Vienna Congress to come out from Europe.

We hope to see you all in London!

## NEWS FROM BLACK & GRAF



At this time of the year, with people taking their holidays, we would expect to see much less activity in the legal world. But the opposite is the case. Our clients seem to be intent on undertaking new business ventures and, as ever, expect a fast and efficient service.

However, it is not all work. We are preparing for our staff outing to France and of course preparations are under way for the May 2000 B.G.I. Conference. The Conference will be centred on the London

Hilton, at Park Lane, we are currently exploring several possible activities for us to take part in, during the weekend. Let us hope that we will be able to live up to the high standards set by our colleagues in Vienna, who organised a truly successful Conference this year. At this point I have to pay tribute to my partner, Robin Graf, who has taken a great deal of care and time in researching the component parts that go into organising a successful Conference.

The amount of detailed planning is unbelievable and Robin, in his usual thorough way, is masterminding everything. We are looking forward to welcoming you to London. Finally, a word about the ever-approaching Millennium. Preparations for the event are gathering pace here, and you could do worse than visit London. As for the writer, however, he anticipates celebrating it in Marbella!

Derek Aarons  
Black Graf & Co, London.  
Founder Member of B.G.I. England and Wales

## AUSTRIA'S FEDERAL ACT FOR NEW FOUNDED ENTERPRISES



1. Austria had a system second to none of stamp duties and fees, sometimes unreasonably high, that had to be paid to the State. Various duties were levied on entrepreneurs needing licenses to open shops, start the machines in factories, simply be registered in the commercial register, be granted a loan, or who just put enough capital into their businesses.

Stamp duties encompass mortgages, assignments, loan agreements, tenancy or leasing agreements, proxies, transfer of shares, stocks, bonds, land or related rights on grounds or buildings. All this costs the hopeful entrepreneur who is said to be the backbone for full employment, a lot of money.

2. More than 200 years after the Austrian emperors invented a tax on the expensive paper required by the State to issue privileges or decisions in writing to its citizens, a new law now frees newly founded companies (including partnerships) from any stamp duty or fee to be paid to the State in connection with licences, foundation, registration and related matters or if there is a new enterprise established and the owner had not opened such or a similar enterprise in the last 15 years.

Free from transfer taxes, stamp duties are:

- a) any document related to the foundation or establishment of a company.
- b) the transfer/sale of land into the company.
- c) the applications for registration in the Commercial registry.
- d) duties for the entry in the land registry.
- e) the capital tax for capital gain in as equity into a company.
- f) the stamp duties for shares or stocks put into a company.
- g) for 12 months the employee's duties to the family funds of the wages and salaries paid to the employees and contributions to the social welfare fund to cover employee's accidents.

h) the contributions to the commercial chamber for 12 months. A new enterprise is founded only in case a new structure is built, any mere change of ownership or regrouping is excluded from the benefits of that act.

3. The Neugrundungs Forderungsgesetz BGBl I 106-1999 is something like a milestone in Austria to establish a favourable climate for new enterprises and to react to the demand of Austria's economy.

4. Together with new regulations of the Steuerreformgesetz 2000 (Federal Act of Amendments to Tax Acts 2000) BGBl. 1999 Volume I 106 of 14.7.99) Austria has become even more attractive to foreign investment

The further tax incentives are:

- a) allowance of further 25% to 35% of cost of research.
- b) deduction of additional 9% of cost of training and education of employees.
- c) taxation rate reduced to 25% of the increase of equity in the year.
- d) the donation or the heritage of enterprises or shares of companies of more than 25% of its shares/equity are up to 5,000,000 of value transferred free from heritage/donation taxes, in case the donator/deceased is/was unable to work or older than 55 years.

5. A corporation tax of 34%, all dividend income of daughter companies with a share of 25% or more exempt from tax in the mother company and wide network of Double Taxation Agreements make Austria not a tax haven, but a more and more interesting location for foreign investments.

Dr. iur. Johannes Neumayer  
Mag. Rer. soc. oec. Neumayer & Walter, Vienna.  
Member of B.G.I. Austria.

## HONG KONG CONFLICTS PREDICTED IN UNPREDICTABLE YEARS

Celebrating the 2nd anniversary of handover of Hong Kong to China, many applauded the genius idea of «one country, two systems» practising in the HKSAR. The region's example bears the responsibility of being a model for Macau and even Taiwan to follow. The one country, two systems» faces its most serious test since its birth by the recent conflict arising from the interpretation of the Basic Law in relation to the immigration issue.

The granting to an allegedly 1.67 million

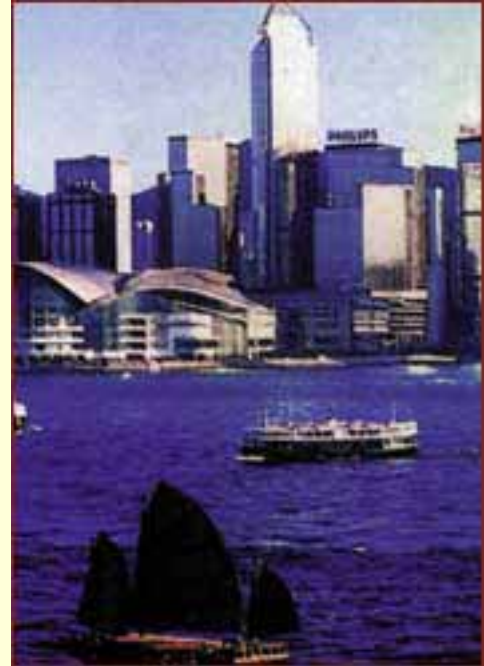
mainlanders the right of abode in Hong Kong has also generated into a heated debate as to whether we should stick to the rigid principle of rule of law or rather than bending it a little to suit the political and economical pragmatism as it has been seen often practised in the mainland

Looking into the substance of the two legal systems in the «two systems» going hand in hand under the same country, the occurrence of such conflict is not surprising

During the years of British governance, Hong Kong has developed quite a sophisticated and well established common law legal system. As Hong Kong is also well known for her separation of the legislation, the administration and the judiciary, the Hong Kong judiciary has in the past enjoyed the privilege of free from any pressure and influence from the political and the executive authorities. Arguably, one most damaging result of the recent row over the interpretation of the Basic Law is that the Hong Kong judiciary has perceived to have been overridden in its ruling and even to the extent of being pressurized in making a decision along the line derived by the government and the political master in the mainland.

As the basic Law was born against the background of a meeting of the two distinct legal systems, it is reasonable to anticipate that the recent conflict is only one of the many incidents to come. One could only hope that the experience and outcome of the conflict and argument would generate certain and consistent legal rules and principles for all to follow. In this uncertain time, certainty in the law is the last frontier we can afford to let go.

Sr. Vincent To. W.K. To & Co.,  
Beijing, Hong Kong.  
Member of B.G.I. China.



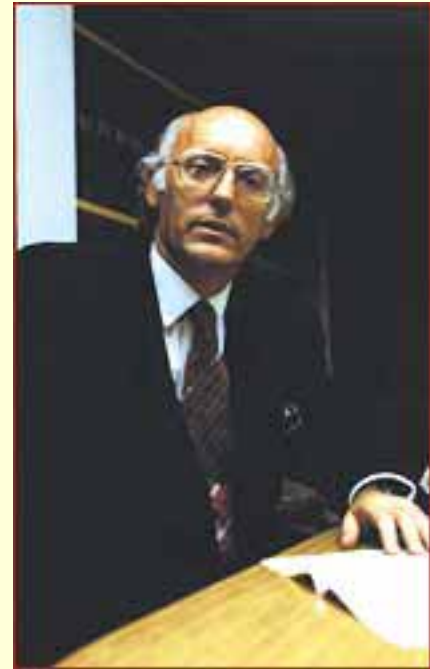
## ARGENTINA AND THE NEW MILLENIUM

The Republic of Argentina closes the final decade of the XX Century with remarkable characteristics, both in the institutional and economic fields.

Regarding the first field, it has been sixteen years since the institutional normalization and the third change of government has taken place, the whole frame of the force of the republican and democratic system of its government. It is integrated, together with Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay, the recent integration of Chile to the Mercosur, and it has achieved, in the economic field, a deep transformation, changing from a close structure to a wide opening to the international market.

Its currency has come to a near stability, overcoming, after nearly 9 years, a terrible inflation, and achieving a currency in equality 1 to 1 with the American dollar. The margin of foreign exchange was big, a 10% of the PBI, and the exports increased a 100% on that period

Nearly all public services are privatized, with a financial system that did not suffer any kind of turbulence in the crisis of the Asian Southó East, of Russia and the most recent devaluation of Brazil, despite its influence in the market of Mercosur, did not alter the exchange rate, the rate of internal interest and not even the inflation which goes on with a percentage close to 0% annual. In this context, Argentina, by itself, and as an integrating part of the Mercosur, offers an attractive market, with juridical safety (guaranteed by the two political forces that struggle for the athernancy nowadays: the government party and the opposition) and with good possibilities of investment in the industrial, mining, forest, energy and scientific fields. Within the mentioned frame our Law Firm Lichtmann, Indij, Martínez Raymonda y Asociados, situated in a privileged place of the city centre of Buenos Aires located at 100 metres from the Palace of the Courts, has qualified itself to offer an efficient, quick and personalized service, in the different areas such as constitution of societies and branch offices, services of administration of societies, fiscal domicile, fiscal, local and international planning, legal advice to obtain financial resorts, valuation of companies, strategic alliances, evaluation of investment projects, fiscal advise, audit, regime of foreign investments, company law, commercial law, law of creditors and bankruptcy, etc. Also we have come to an agreement with the firm Roberto Carlos Macho y Asociados, Auditors and Consultants, members of the International Organization URBACH HACKER YOUNG INTERNATIONAL UHY, to offer joint assistance in the areas where, due to the nature of the subject an interdisciplinary work is required. .



## BOLIVIA TAKES CONCRETE STEPS TO GUARANTEE JURIDICAL SECURITY OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT



The Republic of Bolivia began a new stage in its institutional life in 1982 when democracy was restored. Bolivia, in the first years of the democratic and institutional freedom have a priority of political opening-up necessary after so many years of military authoritarianism. Since 1992, concrete steps are being taken to modernize justice and to guarantee juridical security of the foreign investments.

This, was highly beneficial for the country as was the capitalization process of the State owned enterprises, an innovative system of privatisation, brought forth by former president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. Within this climate of attractive investment, it was necessary to guarantee the juridical security and, thus, concrete steps have been taken to this end. The Constitutional Tribunal, the Council of the Judgeship and the Ombudsman have been created.

The approval of new laws and judicial reform are, without a doubt, important steps to guarantee foreign investors juridical security, but they are not the only ones. In this sense the investors should have good juridical advice based on local knowledge. Thus, Salazar, Salazar & Associates (SS&A) is one of the leading law offices in Bolivia since 1982, and it provides a full range of services to its clients. Its major thrust is in corporate, civil, commercial, constitutional and international private law, although it handles all other legal specialties.

With a thorough knowledge of the public sector of Bolivia, SS&A has been engaged in a number of legal consultancies related to the sectors involved in the capitalization (privatisation) process undertaken by the government of Bolivia. SS&A, as advisor and legal representative of foreign investors, was part of the team that made possible the adjudication, in the public international bidding processes, of the privatisation of state owned companies in the electrical, hydrocarbons and aviation sectors. Among its partners, SS&A includes former lawmakers, ministers, judges, law professors and attorneys with in-depth experience in the Bolivian legal context and, as such, they are lawyers who are recognized as leaders in their respective fields of expertise.

All of its staff has established expertise in Bolivia and most are fluent in English, Portuguese, French, as well as in other languages and Spanish. SS&A's objective is to achieve efficiency and transparency in its practice. Detailed planning, carefully crafted strategy, dynamism, innovation and close coordination are of paramount importance in our service .

Dr. Fernando Salazar Paredes Salazar,  
Salazar & Asociados.  
La Paz  
Member of B.G.I. Bolivia.

# BGI NEWS

Balms Group International An International Association of Independent Lawyers Firms

LEWIN & WILLS ATTORNEYS-AT-LAWS: AMONG THE 8 «MOST RECOMMENDED»  
LAW FIRMS IN COLOMBIA

Lewin & Wills, Attorneys-at-Law, a Colombian Law Firm associated to Balms Group International since 1998, has been recently acknowledged at international level as one of the «most recommended» law firms in Colombia. This law firm was established in 1978 and from its very beginning has had an outstanding performance regarding tax, foreign investment and exchange law matters.



In recent years it has extended its scope of activities to commercial, corporate law, mergers and acquisitions.

Recently the London editorial company «LAW BUSINESS RESEARCH LTD.» published the results from an independent research conducted in Latin America, released under the title «LATIN LAWYER: A Who's Who of Latin American Law Firms», which purpose was to evaluate the market of legal services in Latin American countries and identify the main law firms which participate in the provision of such services, as from an international stand point, raking them in each country as «most recommended», «highly recommended» and «recommended».

The scope of the investigation conducted in this research covered more than 1.000 law firms, of which 194 were selected in 11 countries in Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela). The selection was made pursuant to strictly objective criteria corresponding to the capacity of the selected law firms to serve the needs of international clients conducting business in Latin America.

-LAW BUSINESS RESEARCH LTD.- and its editor Sebastian O'meara (sebastian.omeara@ibresearch.com) recognized worldwide in the legal market as per their independent publications and their series also recognized throughout the world under the title «Who's Who». This independent research ranked Lewin & Wills, Attorneys-at-Law as one of the 8 law firms «most recommended» in Colombia, and making reference thereto as «... the one boutique firm in this category [most recommended], specialising exclusively in tax and foreign exchange issues, areas in which Alfredo Lewin and Emilio Wills are dominant players in Bogotá.» At present, the professional practice at Lewin & Wills, Abogados, is conducted by a working team conformed by 9 attorneys-at-law and 2 public accountants, among which its 4 Partners and 3 Senior Associates have achieved an outstanding level of academic training and professional experience in the main areas of expertise of the Law Firm, and additionally, have extended their practice to commercial, corporate law, mergers and acquisition matters. In order to provide its clients which are widely known both at international and domestic level with integral legal counselling in said areas.

Emilio Wills, Lewin & Wills.  
Santa Fe de Bogotá.  
Member of B.G.I. Colombia.



## ENTREVISTA CON MIEMBROS UHY

STEVEN FISCHER

How long have you been in the position of World President UHY? I have been on the Board of Urbach Hacker Young since its inception in 1987, and since 1996 I have been Chairman of the organization.

What is the importance that you give to professional firms in relation with international nets?

Urban Kahn & Werlin's participation in UHY has been important to the growth of our firm. Clients expect their professionals to be able to render worldwide service. Our affiliation with Urbach Hacker Young has allowed us to provide global services to our existing clients, attract new clients because of our international expertise, and profit from work referred to us by our overseas affiliates. In addition, staff recruitment and retention have been improved by our international affiliation.

What has been your experience as member of an international organization and as President of UHY from the personal and professional point of view? Over the years I have seen our firm attract many clients in the United States that we would not have attached had we not been members of UHY. Our international affiliation is a clear sign that our firm is a global player beyond our local market place. We have found that growing entrepreneurial companies look for global coverage in their service providers. From a personal perspective, UHY has allowed me to broaden my outlook on business matters and to meet many interesting people. UHY has provided me the opportunity to visit many of the world's fastest growing commercial centers. I have learned much during these visits which I have attempted to share with my partners and our clients, giving them a business perspective beyond our local markets.



Do you know our organization?

Many of us in UHY are familiar with BGI, since certain of our members have worked with your members. We, of course, look forward to working more closely together, especially since we have strong offices in many of the cities that you are

represented



What kind of advice would you give to B.G.I., as good expert in professional relations and President of UHY?

My advice to BGI would be to always look for the strongest and best representative in any area you would like to do business in. Many times it is better not to accept a member who you do not believe up to your standards. We also believe it is not necessary to have members in every jurisdiction around the world, but only those where it is likely that business will take place.

URBACH KAHN & WERLIN PC

BERNARD FAY

What kind of initiatives is UHY achieving within the UE frame and the international institutions and organizations such as FMI, Worldwide Bank, etc.? UHY and its members have participated in numerous projects for international organizations. In this sense we should mention a successful and recent work carried out by our Argentinean member for the Worldwide Bank. Besides, there is a new project which is the creation of an economic European association called UHY EUROPE and its aim is the application to contests within the fields of economic auditing and consultancy.

What priority order would you give to the following objectives, in relation with the fact of being integrated in an international association: Referred works, common criteria within the group, corporate unity, control of quality, local image inside your country, service to client?

In the first place I would say the service to client, because within an global economy our clients do not focus their business in a local frame and the fact that we are members of UHY allow us to deal with their needs, improving in this way our professional services. Of course we all like to receive referrals from our associates, helping in this way to the growing of the firm and giving us the chance of supporting companies first steps in our country. The other objectives are equally important for us, and I would consider them to be at the same level. In our opinion the common criteria and the quality control go together due to the fact that they both are deeply related to the quality of service. The corporate unity contributes to identify the brand, but it is something that should be made step by step, because the philosophy of the international associations differs among them, some give priority to the global integration and some others support the independency of the members. The local image is very much improved with the affiliation to an international association. Clients are aware of a restless attitude from the firm member of an international association, in an international market that is growing but also becoming more approachable.

In what way do you consider positive the cooperation between an international association of lawyers and of auditors?

I think that the relation between professional firms is very positive and it helps our clients in a



way that they do not have to face the responsibility of coordinating the different professionals that are needed for any kind of transactions. In the international frame the reasons are stronger, due to the fact that the difficulty for the client is bigger when he is not in his own country. Member of Fay & Co, with offices in Madrid & Marbella and European member of the UHY World Board Meeting.

ROBERTO MACHO

How do you see the future of the commercial and professional relations between Europe and South America?

The last few years there has been a large increase of European investment in the region. This tendency is mainly in Argentina, due to it's historic roots with Europe, more so than its neighbours. It is with the entry of Argentina to Mercosur that the presence of Europe is becoming more important in South America, also impacting on countries that do not belong to the common market. The neo liberalism wave that swept the region in the last decade helped a lot of companies with European collaboration to acquire enterprises that were previously state run. I personally think that this collaboration improves the flow of business relationships between both Continents. In fact the past years have shown an increase in the number of professional enquiries our firm has received regarding establishing bio lateral commercial relationships. The twin facts of very rich natural resources in Latin America and wealthy consumers in Europe creates great opportunities for the future.

Are UHY and you, as representative in the Latin American subcontinent deeply related to the relation Mercosur Andean pact ó EEC?

Nowadays our organisation has started to work with international institutions that require the common co-operation of several offices with the ability to provide services in common markets. In particular we have created UHY Europe with the participation of all the European firms with the main aim of managing projects from the E.U. In the same way in South America, the offices of Argentina and Brazil have been co-operating to get professional advice to local firms who wish to develop in Europe. Of course, Mercosur still has to mature compared with the E.U. and I trust it will be on the same level at some stage in the future. Regarding the Andean Pact, nowadays there is no common effort similar to the one described in the Mercosur or E.U.

Do you think that there are many differences between a professional association of lawyers and a association of auditors?

I understand basically there is no difference between an international net of auditors, and a net of lawyers, regarding their organisation and the service to clients. In fact, my experience is very valuable in this sense because my office has been working together with the member of B.G.I. in Argentina successfully.



Did you already know B.G.I. before this interview?  
Yes I did, through our Marbella office. I even had the chance to meet the President Mr. Juan Luis Balmaseda de Ahumada during his visit to Argentina. From then on we have established a strong and fruitful relationship with the member of B.G.I. in Argentina, Siseles, Lichtmann, Indij & Associates.

What kind of advice would you give to B.G.I., as good expert in professional relations and President of UHY in Southamerica?  
It is very difficult to give any kind of advice to a net that is having a lot of success. Nevertheless, I would dare to suggest the importance in the selection of firms of the philosophical and compatibility criteria, the services on offer and the personal qualities of their members.

Member of the International Executive Committee of URBACH HACKER YOUNG INTERNATIONAL and responsible for the Latin American net. He is also the contact member of his office in Argentina (MACHO & ASOCIADOS) that represents UHY.

# BGI NEWS

Balms Group International An International Association of Independent Lawyers Firms

## BALMS ABOGADOS GALICIA

Balms, a leading firm of lawyers has a mission statement to provide incomparable service to its clients and in accordance with this has as its priority the expansion of the number of cities in which it will be represented worldwide.

The benefits are not only economic but also the integration and alliances these arrangements bring. A prime example of this strategy is Balms Abogados Galicia which was opened in this region of high economic development. It aims to benefit from both the aforesaid integration and the ties with other countries.



The Galician economy based on shipping, fishing, quarries and other long established activities is in a developing stage and growing internationally.

Textiles, a comparative newcomer, has good foreign scope and also the recent quality tourism industry with its need of property and real estate, has opened up new demands in the legal business and company formation. Another focus of interest is highlighted by the close proximity of Northern Portugal and this interior economic development is favoured by the European Union with the creation of the «Atlantic Axis» euro region.

This covers 18 cities in the Galicia/N. Portugal area and has brought about tremendous economic activity both with Galician companies developing in Portugal and many joint ventures being created. Lastly, the region's growth is also greatly helped by the historic migration of Galicians to Iberoamerica and it is these very ties that are of inestimable value to the future of the whole region. Balms Abogados Galicia has taken on board all the aforementioned points and this new law firm, within the B.G.I. framework, has the clear objective of moving this project fully ahead.

We invite you all to visit us in the city of Vigo.

David Martínez.

Balms Abogados, Galicia

Member of BGI Galicia - Spain .