

Report to IARF membership on the 2009 meeting of Council

Ongoing projects affirmed, and preparations begun for 33rd Congress

Now in a new, volunteer-led era, IARF builds on the material and financial opportunity provided by the Japanese Liaison Committee to re-engage membership in its purpose during a difficult period for the world.

Members reconvened this March (9th – 11th) at Tsubaki Grand Shrine, now under the presidency of Thomas Mathew, who as head of the South Asia Co-ordinating Committee (SACC), will host the 33rd Congress of IARF, to be held in his home state of Kerala from 4th – 7th September 2010, in Kochi (the former Cochin). A Congress Working Party was formed, and a Host Committee in India will be formed in May.

Rev. Doris Hunter joined Council as replacement for Rev. Abhi Janamanchi, and Rev. Takeshi Nishida, of Japanese member group Ittoen, replaced Rev. Peronne Boddaert and by acclamation was appointed Vice-President until Congress. Criteria for selection of the new Council (2010-2014) were drawn up for the work of the Nominating Committee until the General Meeting at Kochi.

Chapter reports evinced that the Japan Chapter had held a Grassroots Summit resulting in a new vision and direction, which revives the original foundation's goals (individual freedom and responsibility and a striving for inner peace and a contribution to world peace) and includes a membership drive. Notably, IALRW membership has grown from 22 to 150, and contributed considerably to the Ladakh Literacy Education Fund. The India Chapter had organized over one hundred events countrywide, and Human Rights Education (HRE) programs are underway in six states, in the form of two-day workshops supported by local IARF or religious communities (augmenting our limited financial assistance). This HRE round will complete at end-July 2009, the second begins in August and ends August 2010.

Since it began in 2004, HRE is reported by Facilitators to have given a new face to IARF in India, gaining us high regard from social, political and religious leaders. Meanwhile the Interfaith Village project grows across four Philippine regions: 53 training cells are operating, with 424 individuals trained in both human rights awareness and techniques for successful duck-

breeding, with almost 400 ducks purchased and disbursed. Grants of £9,500 for HRE India and £7,198 GBP for HRE Philippines were requested for 2009.

The high quality of the EME (Europe/Middle East) region's Belfast conference was noted, and attendance encouraged at the forthcoming EME Mannheim conference (22nd – 27th October 2009). The RFYN's Euro-Med conference in Amman, Jordan (1st–8th August 2008) was appraised, and Morse Flores' hard work appreciated; the Steering Committee now looks to planning the 33rd Congress youth pre-conference (1st–3rd September 2010). A youth conference is also planned, to run parallel with the EME's Mannheim Conference (22nd–27th October 2009), and will seek ways to fund RFYN participation at Congress.

Council decided to participate in the UN's proposed *Decade of Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Co-operation for Peace*. This involves membership of the Steering Committee, and our Geneva representative Dr John Taylor was appointed, having been involved in this important initiative from the outset.

A break-even budget of GBP73,000 income and expenditure was accepted, with charitable expenditure at £23,000. Council felt that next year it would need to monitor the progress of Congress arrangements and review the financial situation, therefore waiting until the day before Congress next year was too long a period; its next meeting will be 24th–26th February 2010, in Kochi, India. Only 50% of travel claims will be allowed. The Executive Committee meeting was held immediately following Council, and the decisions of Council ratified.

The Council sends best greetings to all members, and once again looks forward to hearing about plans and activities. Notably, we passed a motion moved by our President that all members, chapters and regions find ways to celebrate the foundation day of IARF in Boston (May 25th, 1900).



1 - In front of Tsubaki Shrine entrance



2 - Most Rev. Mitsuo Miyake is introduced



3 - Rev. Takeshi Nishida, new Vice-President, speaks



4 - Visioning Committee meeting