

Minutes of the General Meeting of the IARF 5th and 6th September 2010, Kochi, India

Minutes of First Session of General Meeting 2010

1. Opening Actions

The President, Dr. Thomas Mathew, called the meeting to order and welcomed members, observers and visitors. He acknowledged the presence on the stage of the Secretariat Superintendent, Rev. Miwa, the Company Secretary, Mr. Jeffrey Teagle, the past President, Rev. Abhi Janamanchi, and the U.N. representative, Dr. John Taylor, who would also take the minutes of the General Meeting.

2. Review Of Procedures For The General Meeting

Mr. Jeffrey Teagle recalled the 2-day procedure for the General Meeting of discussion followed by decision as adopted in Taiwan. No resolutions had been submitted in advance but urgent matters could be introduced by member groups. In the case of severe disagreement the President may convene a small working group, with at least one Council member, to report to the next meeting.

The meeting adopted these procedures unopposed.

3. Credentials Report

More than 100 members, confirmed as voting delegates, had registered and so there was a quorum.

4. Minutes of 2006 General Meeting

The minutes of sessions 1 and 2 were read and those of session 3 commended to be read before the minutes were put to the vote in the next session.

5. Statement by the Presidents

Rev. Abhi Janamanchi recalled his presidency from 2002 to 2004, a period when IARF moved from professional to voluntary leadership; the outgoing Secretary General, Dr. Daryl Balia, had accepted a negotiated settlement. There was applause as the past President commended the work of Ms. Ramola Sundram. A transitional manager had been funded by UUA and the hospitality of the Konko Church in Osaka had been gratefully accepted for the secretariat; invaluable help had been provided by Mr. Robert Papini, Mr. Morse Flores, Rev. Olivia Holmes, Ms. Lalitha Janamanchi and others; Rev. Geoffrey Usher had taken on supervision of finances in Sheffield; Mr. Jeffrey Teagle had followed up various legal issues with the legal counsellor, Mr. Joss Saunders. By 2008 IARF had turned a corner.

Dr. Thomas Mathew continued the “relay race”. Despite limited resources but helped by many volunteers in regional development, youth work, UN representation and

congress preparation, IARF had come to the 33rd Congress with strong membership support and with the special blessing of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's presence. Under new leadership it was to be hoped that IARF would become yet stronger and still more active.

Questions and comments drew attention to new activities in human rights education in Bangladesh; clarifications were given about the supervision of the secretariat; the hope was expressed that the work of IARF and IALRW be better publicized, notably by active programmes. The President hoped that the website would be used more in future; it already carried newsletters and might have better links to the work of women's and youth groups.

6. Report from Council 2006 -2010

Mr. Jeffrey Teagle recalled the sad death of Ms. Peronne Boddaert. He acknowledged the secretariat work of Mr. Robert Papini both in Osaka and, electronically, when he was travelling. After the major funding from the Netherlands government had been used and reported, further progress in human rights education was made possible by generous voluntary work in India, Bangladesh and the Philippines. A huge effort to maintain and develop youth work had been put in by Mr. Morse Flores and Ms. Esther Kopmels. Dr. John Taylor had continued to represent IARF at the UN. For the future website work and exchange should be promoted.

Rev. Miwa, secretariat supervisor, urged that chapters and members should seek to be self-supporting since large donations were difficult to obtain. He asked if a new site for the secretariat should be considered, possibly in Jerusalem or eventually in Beijing; peace efforts in the Middle East needed encouragement and a new membership in China should be sought. Rev. Yoshinobu Miyake and Rev. Miwa both appealed for wider financial support.

During questions reservations were expressed about the choice of Jerusalem since that might, at present, inhibit some Muslims; the issue of avoiding bank transfer costs could be avoided by using systems like Pay Pal; more study was needed of ways to make IARF more self-sustaining.

7. Presentation of Financial Reports and Audited Statements

Rev. Geoffrey Usher expressed special gratitude to former staff person, Ms. Ramola Sundram, and to Dr. Thomas Mathew and many others who had taken forward the human rights education programmes. He was grateful for the professional financial work of Mr. Tony Ball and Mr. Gary Garner. Despite the complications of working in numerous currencies and the need to make legal accountability in UK where IARF is registered as a charity, the accounts had been successfully audited and the relevant documents were available for inspection by any who wished to see them. The excess of expense over predicted income was partly to be explained by currency fluctuations; investment income had fallen in the context of global fragilities; nevertheless expenses had been reduced by some £6000. The treasurer expressed particular gratitude for generous contributions from RKK and for the value of office rental being graciously held by Konko Church as a forthcoming contribution to IARF.

Questions included concern about the loss of UUA contributions, despite their covering some of the transition and removal costs from Oxford to Osaka; reference was made to special grants to cover youth meetings, notably in Jordan.

8. Report of Constitutional Changes agreed in July 2007 at Clearwater

Rev. Abhi Janamanchi recalled criticisms from UK Charity Commissioners and Companies House and remedial proposals made by Mr. Joss Saunders. The 53 delegates at Clearwater agreed unanimously to various changes which facilitated the shift from professional to voluntary leadership of IARF; improvements were also made to voting procedures. Mr. Jeffrey Teagle offered a “teach-in” for members who required more explanations.

9. Report of the Nominating Committee

The President reminded the meeting of the criteria of achieving balance between regions, religions and genders. A slate, mainly of nominations from chapters, had been prepared since March 2010 and revised and then approved at Council meetings in recent days. The President read the names of the proposed slate.

In answer to questions the President drew attention to the high number of nominees who would stand for the first time. There would be 3 “open” seats with 4 candidates for these. Nominations by chapters could not be changed unless the entire slate was rejected.

The 4 candidates for the open seats made brief presentations:

- Ms. Kathy Matsui recalled attendance in IARF meetings since 1984; she was active in the Japan chapter and particularly in human rights education.
- Ms. Hemalatha has served IARF for 20 years and worked as an educator and mediator, for example in programmes of Mysore member group Forum for Harmony and Peace, and as a family advisor to the Muslim community there.
- Ms. Jennifer Dickson has been active in the Unitarian Council in Canada and has had a special concern to be an advocate for youth involvement.
- Ms. Wytske Dijkstra is Chair of the Europe/Middle East region for IARF; she has attracted some funding for IARF. She works for respect of diversity and hopes for a supportive secretariat, for an accountable council and for transparent procedures.

The President extended best wishes to all four candidates.

Minutes of Second Session of General Meeting 2010

1. Opening Actions

The President, Dr. Thomas Mathew, called the meeting to order.

2. Credentials Report

It was reported that 102 voting members were present, 29 from South Asia, 23 from East Asia, 18 from North America, 26 from Europe and the Middle East and 6 from other areas. There was thus a quorum.

3. Distribution of ballots for voting for Open Seats

Ballots were distributed and would be valid with 3 or fewer names.

During brief discussion a motion was proposed and accepted in the following terms: That the President of IALRW and the nominee of the young adults (RFYN) be automatically given a seat on the IARF Council. This should be implemented in 2014.

The President asked that this recommendation be forwarded to the newly elected Council.

4. Motion to approve the Minutes of the General Meeting 2006

The minutes of the General Meeting 2006 were adopted with one abstention.

5. Motion to accept Tte Auditors' Report

The Auditors' Report was adopted unanimously.

6. Report on ballot for Open Seats

The ballot by 104 voting members elected Ms. Matsui, Ms. Dickson and Ms. Dijkstra. They were invited to the platform and all candidates were warmly applauded.

In brief discussion it was hoped that the new Council would revisit the definition of IARF purposes as an aim to build a community. Mr. Shlomo Alon on his 66th birthday sang a verse of rejoicing that so many from different backgrounds were sitting together.

7. Motion to accept the slate of the Nominating Committee

After a motion was adopted that a vote should be counted and after a clarification that 2 young adults were on the slate, the vote was taken with 71 in favour of the slate, with 15 opposed and with 4 abstentions.

The newly elected President, Rev. Mitsuo Miyake, was welcomed to the stage. He thanked the members of the 33rd Congress for the honour of his election and pledged to do his best to fulfil their trust in him.

Rev. Yoshinobu Miyake confirmed that 12,800,000 yen or \$150,000 would be transferred from Konko Church to a “survival fund” for IARF. There was no linkage between this transfer and the election of the new President.

The secretariat superintendent, Rev. Miwa, expressed joy that this had been such a successful congress. Rev. Norio Sakai congratulated the new president and hoped that the reports of the Commissions that had met in Kochi would help the new Council to find new directions for IARF as a grassroots organization with active chapters and inter-chapter relationships.

8. Motion to adjourn

Rev. Abhi Janamanchi proposed a motion of thanks to former President Dr. Thomas Mathew for all his hard work to make a successful congress; the invitation to His Holiness the Dalai Lama had been inspired, and resulted in a great experience. Thanks were also due to Dr. Homi Dhalla among many others. The motion was carried and Dr. Thomas Mathew replied that the help of so many had made the congress a success. He recalled that he had once introduced a *hibakusha* from Hiroshima to Mother Theresa; he had joined IARF in 1999 and had felt great support from members. He expressed thanks for facilitations from local, regional and national government offices. He thanked the many excellent speakers and leaders at the congress. He looked forward to the contributions of the new leadership: “I am sure that IARF is in safe hands”. The vision of IARF should expand to new continents, notably Africa and Latin America, and thus help to realize action and vision for the whole of humanity.

The general meeting of the 33rd Congress of IARF was adjourned.