

## **IARF General Meeting 2014 - Minutes**

The Business Meeting assembled on Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> August 2014 in the Avon Room at the University of Birmingham, England, UK.

1. The meeting was chaired by the President, Rev. Mitsu Miyake of Konko-kyo, who called the Meeting to order at 9:00. The Meeting agreed the procedures for conduct. No voting would take place during the first session (26 August). Items for decision would be presented during the second session (27 August) and the registrar would ensure that all correctly registered delegates received their voting cards by then.

### **2. Quorum**

The registrar, Rev. John Clifford, confirmed that 27 Member Groups and 10 Chapters had been registered and that the meeting was quorate.

### **3. Minutes**

As the Acting Secretary, Rev. Eric Cherry, would be involved in some of the presentations to the Meeting, Rev. John Clifford was asked to take minutes. Minutes of the last meeting were circulated and would be acted upon during the 27 August session.

### **4. The President's Report**

Rev. Miyake then reviewed the four years of his presidency. He felt there had been some successful and some not so successful items to report in a period of substantial change. The Secretariat, located at Oxford, had had to be closed and in 2007 relocated to Osaka, at the same time staff reduced to one. This involved substantial changes in operations aided by the increasing functionality of the internet. He was pleased that after 50 years of involvement in IARF, the increased leadership of Japanese peoples and their work ethos were instrumental in the necessary reconstruction of IARF finances. As the staff was greatly reduced in number, Council members had to be more active than formerly. Between Congresses, it was the Council that made decisions. The Council meeting in April 2013 made the decision to hold this Congress at the University of Birmingham.

Four committees (Finance, Investment and Fundraising; Visioning, Activities and Recruitment; By-Laws; Communications & External Relations) met, and one Commission (Peace) and would report. Regionally, there had been a human rights programme in India, encounter work in the Holy Land, and a European and Middle East meeting in Switzerland. A newly established chapter in Kenya had begun activities in 2013, and new initiatives were reaching out to groups in the Balkans.

The President expressed his hope that the incoming President would find that IARF was now in a healthy and accountable state that the new President would be able to develop further. He gave thanks for the financial input from Rev. Cherry and Rev.

Takeshi Nishida which had been very helpful, and gave general thanks to all who had helped during his term of office, including members of the Council.

## 5. **REPORT of COUNCIL**

Rev. Eric Cherry, Acting Secretary, then made the Report of Council for the period 2010-2014. Council had met annually and he thanked the Japan Liaison Committee and the British Chapter for hosting Council meetings.

Rev. Cherry then spoke briefly of four Partner Organisations who had shared in the programme work of IARF and introduced their speakers.

A. Adv. Rengapashyam: There are now 4 Human Rights Centres in India that provide training, and this model was being introduced to Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

B. Brother Albert Xaviour, India: Bro. Xaviour worked with young adults (aged 18 to 35) in capacity building in Human Rights and Religious Freedom projects. Mutual understanding and personal confidence were developed for 380 participants through research projects and interfaith cooperation on Religious Freedom issues; Mention was made of one project on education involving 120 Indians and 20 Americans. Peace Walks and exposure to village life were part of this project. He thanked IARF for its support of their programme.

C. Dr. Yehuda Stolov, Interfaith-Encounter Association, working in the Holy Land. He reported that 65 local groups had been formed to promote mutual respect between Christians, Muslims, and Jews. This was a programme started before IARF contact but IARF's support was evidence of cutting edge involvement in peace work. A few of the groups started with involvement of Rabbis which then extended to some of their students.

D. Mr. Morse Flores spoke of his work in Geneva. The UNO office in Geneva goes back to 1955 and IARF's presence there goes back to John Taylor, in the 1980s. Mr. Flores started in 2011. His IARF work is grounded on Article 18 of the Human Rights convention, and IARF's registration with the Geneva Office of the UNO gives it access which many NGOs do not have, therefore some 100 NGOs collaborate with IARF in developing presentations. His main work falls under training and capacity building; advocacy; and lobbying. The IARF website has a section on its UN work.

Rev. Eric Cherry confirmed that at Council meetings, support for these activities was undertaken. He then introduced Doris Hunter, who had been on the group looking at the Constitution and Bylaws.

Rev. Dr. Doris Hunter then spoke to the Bylaw Amendments to be formally presented on 27 August. She explained that Bylaws are generally descriptive in nature, as distinct from the Constitution, which lists powers. Without a General Secretary, the roles of the officers are more active.

Council met in 2013 and 2014 and at each meeting decided on Bylaw amendments to be put to the General Meeting. These were displayed on the screen and paper copies should be available for everyone before the next session.

Bylaw suggested changes included:

- Clarification of President's role to uphold the Constitution and represent IARF
- A look at the responsibilities of the Regions
- A limit of two terms for Council members and a reduction in numbers from 19 to 11
- Abolishing the Executive Committee (it was clarified that this was agreed by Council by 7-6 but needed to be passed by the General Meeting to be effective)

Questions from the floor were put and discussed. Company Law in England puts the Company Secretary, the Treasurer, and the President as the responsible posts for ensuring compliance with the law and IARF statutes. It was noted that there were two proposed changes to Bylaw 7 and Rev. Cherry explained that there were two sets of Bylaw amendments with a year between consideration; if the first were passed, the second would then be considered.

It was confirmed that for the 27 August session, all proposed amendments would be on screen as well as available in paper form.

## **6. Finance**

The President explained that Jeff Teagle resigned as Treasurer in December 2013 and Rev. Takeshi Nishida had taken over as interim Treasurer. The Auditor, Tony Ball was expected to be present and his report was available - but as actual decisions would be made on 27 August, Rev. Cherry would present the report at that session, in his capacity as Chair of the Finance Committee.

## **7. Report of Nominating Committee**

Rev. Cherry explained that the Nominating Committee was presenting a slate comprising 2 representatives of each region, one youth representative, and one representative of IALRW. There was one Open Seat to be elected at the General Meeting on 27 August and there were three candidates for this seat: Mr. Robert Ince of the United Kingdom; Dr. Jared Onyari of Kenya; and Rev. Jefferson Ghauri of Pakistan. Each of these candidates was given 5 minutes to present themselves to the meeting. A written ballot would be conducted towards the beginning of the session.

## **8. Other Business**

Rev. Dr. Richard Boeke, Convenor of the Peace-Making Commission spoke briefly to their work and report. He felt it was crucial that IARF be willing to speak out to all threats to religious harmony and liberty.

The Meeting was then adjourned until the next day.

General Meeting second session starting at 9:00 on 27 August 2014 in the Avon Room at the University of Birmingham.

## **Finance**

As a carry-over from the previous session it was explained that the accounts were kept by calendar year and were presented for the 2006-2013 years in US\$. Changes over this period were noted. Investment income was increasing and there was a balance of \$314,702. A full financial report was available on request.

### **1. Credentials Report**

Rev. John Clifford confirmed that 81 registered delegates representing 24 groups and 10 chapters had been registered. The meeting was declared quorate.

### **2. Consideration of Bylaw Amendments**

The President explained that since some of the Bylaws affected the other items on the agenda, they would be considered before the presentation of the Slate and the ballot for the Open Seat.

*Bylaw Amendments and New Bylaw proposed from the 2013 meeting of Council:*

Items were taken in the order of the formal paperwork.

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| (1) <b>Appointment of UN Representatives</b> | This was PASSED |
| (2) <b>Executive Committee</b>               | This was PASSED |
| (3) <b>Nominating Committee</b>              | This was PASSED |
| (4) <b>Secretary</b>                         | This was PASSED |
| (5) <b>Treasurer</b>                         | This was PASSED |
| (6) <b>Administrator</b>                     | This was PASSED |
| (7) <b>Presidency and Vice-presidency</b>    | This was PASSED |
| (8) <b>Regions</b>                           | This was PASSED |

All eight Bylaws and Amendments from the 2013 Council were thus passed without further amendment to their wording.

*Bylaw Amendments proposed from the 2014 meeting of Council:*

Items were taken in the order of the formal paperwork.

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| (1) <b>Three Consecutive Terms</b>                    | This was PASSED |
| (2) <b>Change in number of Council and Open Seats</b> |                 |

This item produced a vote that was so close that a written ballot was called. Prior to this ballot being taken, the meeting was suspended briefly so that those who had not collected their official voting papers were able to do so. The result of the written ballot was 52 in favour, 26 against. Being exactly a 2/3 majority the President declared the motion PASSED.

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| (3) <b>Abolish Bylaw 7 [Executive Committee]</b> | This motion FAILED 39-41 |
|--|--------------------------|

None of the proposed Amendments had further amendment to their wording.

A full list of the Bylaws and Amendments that were passed is in Appendix 1 of these minutes.

**3. Consideration of The Peace Commission Motion**

This motion was PASSED. The wording of this motion is in Appendix 2.

**4. Consideration of The Nominating Committee's Slate**

The Slate was PASSED as presented.

**5. Election of Open Seat Member of Council**

Ballots were distributed. These were then collected and counted while the General Meeting continued.

**6. Minutes of the Previous General Meeting**

These were approved as presented. The text is in Appendix 3 to these Minutes

**7. Auditor's Report**

The motion to accept the Auditor's Report was PASSED.

**8. Announcement of Result of Ballot for Open Seat**

It was announced that Mr. Robert Ince of the United Kingdom was elected to the new Council. A full list of new Council Members will be in Appendix 4 to these Minutes.

**9. Thanks**

The new President, Rev. Drs. Wytse Dijkstra of the Netherlands, made an acceptance speech in which she noted that IARF and its Council were now smaller than formerly but that this meant it could work more intensely. She set her goals for the next four years as “Belief with Integrity” and “Freedom from Harassment” and indicated that the various tools IARF members had at their disposal to work for these goals included personal example.

The outgoing President, Rev. Mitsuo Miyake, gave his thanks to all who had worked so hard for IARF over the past four years; he thanked IARF for the opportunity to serve it over the last eight years; he assured IARF of his continuing support in the future.

He then declared the General Meeting closed.

---

Appendix 1 – List of the Bylaws & Amendments passed

Appendix 2 – Peace Commission Motion

Appendix 3 – Minutes of the previous General Meeting (2010)

Appendix 4 – List of new Council Members