

# EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE (ERC) REPORT

to the World Subud Council Meeting, Spain, June 2009

## ERC BRIEF AND MEMBERS

Following the decision to create a function within the ISC / WSA executive, Amalia Rasheed was appointed in September 2008, to coordinate work of external relations and to build a team to support this work.

Within this brief are five areas which although specific, also have overlaps as the report will show. (In no particular order of priority)

1. Inter-spiritual relations
2. United Nations
3. WSA Forum
4. Our culture and image / questions re organisational changes
5. PR, communications, website information

Katherine Carré joined the team as UN consultant, while continuing as main representative to the UN in Geneva. Victor Margolin coordinates the development of a Forum programme at the next world congress, while continuing to contribute to UN related work after having coordinated ERC work in this respect during the past term. Stefan Freedman, coordinating the initiative to reflect on our image and culture, is advisor to the team on general issues of public relations. Rohana Fraval has just recently joined the team to coordinate matters relating to Inter-spiritual dialogue.

## 1. INTER-SPIRITUAL DIALOGUE

Previously we used the term 'interfaith' over which there has been much discussion, particularly as it is generally used in reference mainly to the Abrahamic faiths. So the term 'inter-spiritual' is now considered more suitable for our use considering that it is wider in reference including all faiths and spiritual traditions.

As reported already earlier this year, we submitted proposals for participation in the programme of the *Parliament of World Religions* (POWR) to be held in Melbourne during December this year. As a reminder, the proposal included a panel presentation of Subud, a panel on Education and spirituality (GHFP), Gardens of Forgiveness presentation, and interactive workshop on 'What is my responsibility for Peace'. (Full proposals are available again on request). A selection process was due to be completed by the end of April when we should have been notified whether our proposals were accepted, however to date we haven't yet heard.

Meanwhile though, Osanna has been contacted by the Council for the POWR informing of the launch of their 2009 Ambassador Program. She has been nominated by the Council's Executive Director, Dirk Ficca and asked to join as Ambassador, based on her role as WSA chair and the '*interfaith involvement and significant contribution to the interfaith movement*'. We don't yet know what that would entail, but Osanna is looking into it.

In any case, for the WSA Osanna, Garrett, Amalia and Rohana plan to attend the event. Others including SICA Australia chairman Sebastian Flynn, SD Australia chairlady Sofiah Mackay, and members of the Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace (GHFP) also intend to participate. Reduced rates are offered for registrations of groups, so we have applied for a group registration code which is being used by Subud members interested in attending.

We plan to include the theme of Inter-spiritual dialogue on the Forum programme at world congress, where experience of this event would also be shared.

## 2. UNITED NATIONS

Discussions have been underway with SDIA concerning the work that had been pending since the last council term; i.e. to develop a policy for a coordinated approach to support the work of the United Nations according to the consultative status acquired through SDIA. A preliminary draft of a WSA UN Policy Framework has been prepared as a result of discussions held with SDIA, with a working group co-chaired by Sharifin Gardiner and Frederic Richard (on behalf of Osanna). It is still incomplete, as work in progress. However at this stage, it may serve as a detailed report to inform you of the progress made so far, and as a basis to raise any questions or offer suggestions that you may have ahead of our meeting in Spain, so as to make the most of our time together. See separate attachment.

For day-to-day work, Osanna for WSA and Sharifin Gardiner for SDIA have carried decisions together, as was decided at the last congress, and are presently advised by a working group consisting of Frederic, Katherine and Amalia for WSA, Virginia, Solen and Rosanna for SDIA. This work has included support of UN NGO committee work, yearly appointment of UN representatives in New York, Geneva and Vienna, applications and fundraising for training in the Human Rights mechanisms of the UN.

This year's representatives' activities:

### *Geneva*

- Solen Gratiot, representative and appointed last summer as UN administrative coordinator in the SDIA secretariat, took the Advanced Geneva Training Course for NGOs in the Human Rights mechanisms of the UN, in March.

- Katherine Carré, our main Geneva representative, attended the 10<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Council in March and continued to take part in meetings of the two NGO committees which we are members of through SDIA: *Committee on Spiritual Values* and *Global Concerns* and the *Committee on Religions and Belief*. Katherine recently attended the Durban Review Conference, (a review of the conference against racism).

- Frederic and Amalia joined as representatives in Geneva this year and also attended part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Council session in March. During that week the main themes covered were *Implementing the Rights of the Child*, *The Right to Food and Freedom of Religions and Belief*.

*New York*

- Myra Margolin recently attended the 47<sup>th</sup> UN Session of the Commission on Social Development.

- Alexandra Woodward attended a meeting of the UNICEF NGO Committee in New York in February, where she had a chance to present the work that SD members carry out with children.

Representatives' reports are available on request.

### 3. WSA FORUM

In line with the aim to support members in their worldly expression of spiritual experience in Subud, this programme is as yet in a seeding process.

A Forum programme is in planning for the World Congress to identify members interested in reflecting on specific themes relating to human development in the world community such as *A New World Economy, Human Centred Education, Sustainable Development (in preparation also for the UN Earth Summit 2012), Spirituality and Science, Inter-spiritual Dialogue*.

### 4. OUR CULTURE AND IMAGE / QUESTIONS RE: ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES

Stefan Freedman has been asking Subud members worldwide how well our current organisation, culture and image reflect their aspirations for Subud. As Subud is based on individual guidance, many members are keen for the organisation to develop flexibility. They want the language used to describe the Subud exercise to reflect our diverse spiritual backgrounds and individual journeys. At the same time other members are keen to retain a cohesive worldwide organisation which acknowledges the congruence provided by the basis and aims as described by Subud's founder. The challenge for Subud today is to acknowledge and honour both of these needs – to develop a synergy between our progressive and our custodian inclinations. A detailed paper outlining some key questions to be addressed has been prepared for distribution and is attached here.

### 5. PR, COMMUNICATIONS, WEBSITE INFORMATION

The team has contributed to drafting texts for publication of information about the WSA on the internet as well as assisting Julia (secretary) in communications responding to questions concerning information about Subud.

7<sup>th</sup> May 2009

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Attachments:

- WSA UN policy draft
- *'Pulling Together or Pulling Apart'* report from Stefan Freedman on the discussion of our culture and image