



Interreligious & International Federation for World Peace

Seidengasse 28, A 1070 Wien, Austria

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Foundation and First Consultation in Europe

December 16th - 17th 2003; Geneva, Switzerland

Altogether some 52 peace ambassadors met on December 16th and 17th at the Ramada Park Hotel in Geneva, Switzerland, launching the *Interreligious and International Peace Council* (IIPC) in Europe. They arrived from 26 European nations, ranging from Finland to Malta and from Portugal to Bosnia Herzegovina. The peace ambassadors represented a diverse range of backgrounds, including religious leaders, the academia and the diplomatic corps. Among the distinguished religious leaders were Rev. Mariano Perron, Diocesan Delegate for Interconfessional Relationships of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Madrid, Dr. Izhak Daya, Chief Rabbi of the Israelite Community in Geneva, Shaheed Satardien, President of the Muslim Council of Ireland, Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid, Chairman of the Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony and O.P.Sharma, President of the Hindu Council of Temples, both from the UK.

Heiner Handschin, IIFWP regional director for Western Europe, led the audience through the program. The opening panel was composed of Dr. Nihad Fahmy, Secretary General of the Foundation *Dialogue among Civilisations*, Dr. Tom Walsh, Secretary General of the members of the IIFWP Europe presented an overview of the various activities already taking place in Europe. Fritz Piepenburg, Secretary General of the IIFWP Europe touched briefly on the series of one day seminars that took place in 35 European countries between the end of July and the beginning of September 2003. Larisa Zmaher from Slovenia gave an overview of the many practical activities undertaken by the International Relief Friendship Foundation, a relief organisation operating under IIFWP.



Tim Read regional director of the IIFWP for northern Europe reported on the interfaith activities in Great Britain and the founding of the national IIPC in the premises of the House of Lords on invitation by Lord Ahmed, who is the youngest and first Muslim member of the House of Lords. Peter Zöhrer, regional director of the IIFWP in central Europe elaborated on difficulties of interfaith work in Austria, Germany France and Belgium, where religious liberty is still facing stiff opposition from certain ecclesiastical and political circles. Giuseppe Cali, regional director of the IIFWP in southern Europe finally spoke about IIFWP activities mainly in Italy. IIFWP International and Rev. Yong-Cheol Song, Chairman of the IIFWP Europe welcoming the delegates. In two power point presentations, Dr. Walsh and Karen J. Smith lectured on “Principle of Peace”, “Root Causes of Conflict” and “An integrated theory of Governance”.

During the afternoon of the same day, leading members of the IIFWP Europe presented an overview of the various activities already taking place in Europe. Fritz Piepenburg, Secretary General of the IIFWP Europe touched briefly on the series of one day seminars that took place in 35 European countries between the end of July and the beginning of September 2003. Larisa Zmaher from Slovenia gave an overview of the many practical activities undertaken by the International Relief Friendship Foundation, a relief organisation operating under IIFWP.

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The evening program was dedicated to the thought provoking elaborations of four well known European activists, Dr. Marko Tarle from Croatia, Dr. Emmanuel Bezzina from Malta, Dr. Bernard Zamaron from Luxembourg and Dr. Nihad Fahmy from Switzerland. During the resulting discussion it became clear that the peace ambassadors all feel a keen urge for action in order to shape the destiny of the continent for the sake of passing on a more united and peaceful Europe to future generation.

Participants broke up into three discussion groups in the morning of the next day, tackling subjects like “The IIPC-Europe and its potential role to support the UN”, “How can the IIPC-Europe foster interreligious harmony among the European community?” and “How can the IIPC Europe help with the integration of Western and Eastern European nations?”, followed by a report of the results of the discussions during the ensuing plenary.

Dr. Eva Latham, President of *Human Rights International* in the Netherlands, Dr. Emmanuel Bezzina, Founder and President of the *Family Rights Organisation* in Malta were summarizing the conference at the closing session, followed by Dr. Walsh and Mrs. Smith. The Peace Resolution from October 3rd, the foundation day of the IIPC International, was adopted and signed by the European delegates. In his final words, Rev. Song praised the participants for their valuable input: “I was very impressed by the wisdom and level of maturity of all of your comments and contributions ... With you, the peace ambassadors, we have such rich resources for elaborating on a clear vision for the Europe of the future ... If other political and non-political organisations on the European level could have the same spirit of brotherhood and caring for the common good, we could have tremendous hope for the continent and indeed for the entire world.” – It is planned for the proceedings and commentaries of the conference to be published in the form of a booklet.

Fritz Piepenburg
Secretary General - IIFWP Europe