

**WORLD VETERANS FEDERATION
26th General Assembly
Copenhagen (Denmark)
19-23 October 2009**

**REPORT ON THE PLENARY SESSIONS
BY MS HELEN CRAWFORD (AUSTRALIA), RAPPOREUR**

OPENING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. The President, Mr. Abdul Hamid Ibrahim, welcomed all to the conference. He briefly outlined the WVF's aim to be a humanitarian, charitable and peace activist organisation. The WVF was to be involved with international peace activities. He mentioned that the Executive Board had developed a five year strategic plan and announced that the 60th anniversary was to be held in Paris in 2010.

Serbia was granted the floor and stated their objection to Kosovo's presence at the Conference. The President acknowledged their comment and ensured that it would be recorded.

2. The Danish Minister for Defence, Mr. Søren Gade then took the floor. He welcomed all participants to Copenhagen and jokingly assured them: "there is no bad weather, only bad clothes".

3. The Chairman of the Danish Blue Berets followed with his welcome and trusted that the conference would have a successful outcome.

4. His Royal Highness, Prince Joachim added his welcome and quoted the United Nations memorial: "Remember here those who have given their lives for peace". He remarked that the Assembly constituted a unique gathering of former enemies, reconciled and reunited by a common goal to build a better future. He officially opened the Conference.

5. Entertainment followed by a male veterans choir and singer Lene Siel and her band, who had entertained the troops in Croatia in 1994. She concluded her performance with Vera Lynne songs.

DESIGNATION OF THE RAPPOREURS

6. French Speaking: Col. (Rtd.) Alfred Fuller (Cameroon)
English Speaking: Ms. Helen Crawford (Australia)

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

7. The provisional agenda was adopted.

ROLL CALL OF DELEGATIONS

8. The Secretary General called the roll. There were 31 delegations present.

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

9. The rules of procedure, presented by Mr. Jacques Goujat, Deputy President, were adopted by the members.

ELECTION OF THE VICE CHAIR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

10. Col. (Rtd.) Bjarne Hesselberg (Denmark) was elected as Vice Chair of the General Assembly.

DESIGNATION OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

11. Mr. Jacques Goujat was designated Chairman of the Resolutions Committee.

APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

12. The President presented the recommended applications for membership. This followed a vote by the membership as to their acceptance of the Executive Boards' assessment of applications. The following applications were accepted by majority vote with one abstention for DOC 2162 IRAN by Australia.

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| DOC 2158 | Peacekeepers Association Finland |
| DOC 2159 | Union of Associations of veterans and Antifascists of Montenegro |
| DOC 2161 | Veterans and Soldiers Union of war and Military Forces of Georgia "Vaziani Union" |
| DOC 2162 | Veterans and War Victims Foundation of Iran |
| DOC 2163 | Association of Veterans of the National Liberation War of Timor Leste |
| DOC 2164 | Sever Association of Police Veterans Societies – Sever Association |
| DOC 2165 | Umbutfo Swaziland Defence Force Ex Servicemens' Associtaion |

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP STILL UNDER STUDY

13. DOC 2157 Kosovo
Kosovo Liberation Army War veterans Organisation (KLA WVO)

DOC 2160 LATVIA
International Association of French Resistance Fighters "Rezistans Franses"

14. Discussion followed from the floor suggesting the application process for membership was too long.

15. When questioned as to why two applications remained under study, it was stated that this was due to stipulations of the Constitutional Rules. With regard to Kosovo, the problem stemmed from the fact the country was not yet fully recognised by the United Nations. This subject raised considerable discussion for and against the application for membership of Kosovo. Consequently, the Executive Board met and decided to submit the application from Kosovo to the General Assembly, considering that the WVF is a veterans' organisation and should not be influenced by political matters. The application from Kosovo was accepted by the General Assembly with 35 votes for, 2 against and 4 abstentions.

16. The application from Latvia remained under study due to poor communication which had made it impossible for the WVF to obtain all of the necessary information.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

17. Reports on the amendments to the constitution and draft resolutions will be drafted by the rapporteurs of the Resolutions Committee.

WREATH LAYING CEREMONY

18. In the morning of Tuesday 22 October, a wreath laying ceremony was conducted at Copenhagen Citadel.

19. A sightseeing tour through Copenhagen to the Town Hall followed.

20. During this time, the President was introduced to Her Majesty the Queen of Denmark, who sent her greetings. She had attended a WVF conference forty-six years earlier as Crown Princess of Denmark.

PRESENTATION BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS OF THE NETHERLANDS

21. Mr. Jack de Vries presented an outline of his department and a general salute to all veterans.

22. Many favourable comments followed and the President thanked the speaker.

Russia was granted the floor.

23. In précis the presentation thanked the members for the opportunity to speak and gave regards from the Russian veterans. They fully supported the WVF credo and emphasised the importance of education of the young regarding history. They supported the WVF resolutions and the Memory and Reconciliation initiative with European countries. They consider the future of the WVF very important.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

24. The President presented the report of the Executive Board 2006-2009.

The annexes were examined in detail with all questions answered by the appropriate Board member. It was pointed out by the Président d'Honneur that there were no reports on the previous WVF recommendations. This would be rectified in future.

25. The Deputy President presented his report and informed the participants that the French Government paid an annual subvention to the WVF in the amount of 10,000 Euros (not 5,000 as indicated in the report). Some participants expressed concern that such donations made the Federation dependant on the governments that support it.

The Deputy President pointed out that there was no such relationship between the WVF and the French government. The subvention was the same as granted to French Federations. As an NGO, and as outlined in the WVF Constitution, the WVF was not dependant on governments.

It was suggested that the gesture should inspire other governments to contribute.

26. There was vigorous discussion regarding the Strategic Plan. The President assured members that their views would be incorporated.

FINANCE

27. The Treasurer General presented his report highlighting the seriousness of the financial situation. The principle problem was the repeated failure of several associations to pay membership dues.

28. Cyprus was acknowledged and thanked for a 150 Euro donation to the Foundation and Nigeria for payment of 1,000 USD towards membership dues.

29. Discussions included the effect of the international financial crisis, the difficulty for an international body to raise funds and the challenges for the future.

FINANCIAL COMMITTEE

30. Mr. Robert Creange (France), member of the Finance Committee, presented the report.

31. He said that it was imperative to increase funding. He congratulated the WVF Executive Board for their efforts in reducing costs.

32. The audited financial reports for 2006, 2007 and 2008 (annexes L, M, N) were presented.

a) Annex L, 2006 was adopted
32 for, nil against, nil abstentions

b) Annex M, 2007 was adopted
39 for, nil against, nil abstentions

c) Annex N, 2008

The Treasurer General explained that the financial situation was critical. He informed the Assembly that the Danish Government had subsidised the General Assembly in terms of hospitality, transport and interpreters etc. in the amount of 300,000 Euros

The Treasurer General made a personal donation of £100 and Honorary Vice President, Mr. Jan H. Loos, who had attended the Assembly for two days gave £50. Further donations would be appreciated.

The President advised that all transport and accommodation costs for the Executive Board and Staff had been paid by the Danish hosts.

Pakistan questioned whether the auditor should be changed. The Treasurer General advised that the auditor was very economic and had been with the WVF since before 1988.

Turkey questioned the cost of meetings. This was explained as transport and accommodation costs.

Annex N, 2008 adopted.

38 for, nil against, 1 abstention (UK)

DUES SCALE FOR THE YEARS 2010, 2011, 2012

33. The Treasurer General presented the dues scale and emphasised the importance of regular of payment.

He suggested that an offer of part payment would be entertained as lack of payment is not acceptable. Some payment ensures recognition. There is a moral duty to pay. Agreement by the majority adopted the dues scale.

34. There was considerable discussion on the subject of penalties for non payment.

The Président d'Honneur advised that payment of dues was a long term problem. Some appear to be unable to pay but he appealed to organisations to pay at least part. The Constitution allows action against members who fail to comply.

PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE YEARS 2010, 2011, 2012

35. General discussion regarding the severity of the financial situation followed. An exit strategy was suggested and salary increases were questioned. It was pointed out the salaries were governed by French wage levels.

36. The Executive Board had prioritised action on the financial situation and would seek professional assistance.

37. The proposed budgets were adopted:

34 for, 5 against (Netherlands, UK, Croatia, Israel and Pakistan)

3 abstain (Singapore, Sweden, and Norway)

FOUNDATION

38. A foundation was originally set up in the USA many years ago. A second foundation was set up in Luxemburg, which had a lack of response. A further foundation was established in the Netherlands. This fund is still in existence (managed by the Netherlands) and is a "reserve". It pays 10% annually to the WVF.

The current foundation, called the WVF Foundation, is a private fund to support the WVF. The three founding members provided individual contributions and set up in the Netherlands. 20,000 Euro had been collected to date. The SCAP fund loaned (interest free) 7,000 Euro and members of the Dutch association contributed 1 Euro each per year as a loan – approximately 6,000 Euro. The members are:

Mr. Abdul Hamid Ibrahim (Malaysia), President

Mr. Louis Timmermans (Netherlands), Secretary

Mr. David Knowles (United Kingdom), Treasurer

The President advised that donated funds may be specifically assigned. Other funds pay for administration. Jordan pledged 1,000 Euro. The President expressed his thanks.

VETERANS WALK FOR PEACE

39. The first attempt at this event was very successful. Annex O lists 52 countries which participated and includes photos. This would hopefully be an annual event. The United Nations was very pleased with the response.

VISITS TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

40. The President's list was at Annex P. He expressed thanks for the invitations and payment of transport and accommodation costs. WVF was made to feel very welcome on these visits during which the President met heads of state and equivalent.

Turkey expressed appreciation of the President's efforts and queried whether financial support could be obtained from these countries. The President explained that international donations are very difficult to obtain.

Indonesia suggested that as members of the WVF included victims of war there could be a moral demand for support from the "war business" e.g. arms producers.

The President advised that Norway was in the process of approaching lobbyists for the Nobel Peace Prize. Norway was also raising a memorial fund for Gen. Egge which involved the government.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

41. The reports of representatives were attached at Annex Q.

REPORTS OF THE 25TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

42. Annex R.

COMMUNICATIONS

43. Support was required from members, notably by providing information and articles to be included in the newsletter.

WORKING GROUP ON FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND PERSPECTIVES

44. This group had been created upon recommendation of the 25th General Assembly. The Report of the group also included the WVF Five Year Strategic Plan.

There were no particular remarks concerning the 2009-2014 Five year Plan. The President of the WVF requested that the plan be put into action quickly, however it seemed difficult to evaluate progress due to the distances separating the various actors.

The President assured the Participants that the activities in the Plan had been launched in July 2009 and that, in any case, an evaluation would have to be made before 31

January 2010 in order to analyse progress. Evaluations would then be carried out every 6 months.

SECRETARIAT

45. The Executive Director celebrated her thirty years with the WVF this year. All staff provided dedication and excellence in their activities.

46. Turkey suggested that the Constitution and Rules could be posted on the website and Annex G, the RCR report. The President advised that the website was now being managed by the staff in Paris.

SPECIAL SESSION

47. In the morning of Wednesday 21 October, a special session was held entitled: "60th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions"

Mrs Ghislaine Doucet (France) of the International Committee of the Red Cross gave a presentation.

MEETINGS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

48. SCEA Meeting

49. SCAP Meeting

50. SCOW Meeting

51. Veterans Health and Welfare Presentation:

Lt. Col. Jeremy Hinton (United Kingdom) presented the report of the Veterans' Health and Welfare International Cooperation Steering Committee)

52. SCAA Meeting

OUTLINE OF RCR REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

53. Lt. Gen. Knobel, Vice President of the WVF and Chair of the Working Group on Reconciliation, Commemoration and Recognition, presented Agenda item 11. He introduced Prof. Chilczuk (Poland) and Lt. Col. Anthony Chan (Singapore) and pointed out that most work had been done at Standing Committee meetings and by email.

Members were requested to forward any information or changes to the members of the RCR working group.

It is hoped to present the final report at the 60th anniversary in 2010.

There were numerous comments in favour and appreciation.

ELECTIONS AND RATIFICATION OF EX OFFICIO APPOINTMENTS

DESIGNATION OF SCRUTINEERS

54. Ingerlise KLARIS (Denmark)

Haïm YIFRAH (Israel)

Anthony CHAN (Singapore)

ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE BOARD AND MEMBERS OF THE FINANCIAL COMMITTEE

55. PRESIDENT: Mr. Abdul Hamid IBRAHIM
The President expressed his thanks to the General Assembly and his wife.

56. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Mr. Jacques GOUJAT
The Deputy President thanked the Assembly for their confidence but mentioned that the position relied on teamwork.

57. SECRETARY GENERAL: Mr. Mohammed BENJELLOUN
Mr; Benjelloun thanked his supporters.

58. TREASURER GENERAL: Mr. David KNOWLES
Mr. Knowles thanked his supporters.

RATIFICATION OF EX-OFFICIO APPOINTMENTS

59. Chair SCAA/ Vice President WVF
Lt. Gen. (Rtd.) Daniel Pieter KNOBEL

Chair SCAP/Vice President WVF
Brig. Gen. Charlemagne Y. BATAYOLA

Chair SCEA/Vice President WVF
Mr. Dan-Viggo BERGTUN

Chair SCOW/Vice President WVF
Mrs. Marie Elisabeth SVERI

ELECTION OF THE FINANCIAL COMMITTEE

60. Mr. Robert CREANGE
Col. Joe FALZON
Col. Bjarne HESSELBERG

61. Alternate Members
Brig. Vigar AABREK
Brig. Asad HAKEEM
Mr. El Amine RQIBATE

HONORARY TITLES

62. Honorary Vice President:

Col. John MORRICE (Singapore)
Brig. Ian TOWNSEND (United Kingdom)

Brig. Townsend thanked the Executive Board and said he would continue to work for veterans.

Col. Morrice stated that he was honoured by the title and would continue to support the WVF. He extended his thanks.

WVF AWARDS

REHABILITATION PRIZE

63. Lt. Gen. Knobel took the floor. He explained the Rehabilitation prize. Four prizes were to be presented in 2009.

- a) Lt. Gen. (Rtd) AUSHEV (Russia)
- b) Daniel BEN ABU (Israel)
- c) The CRPG Rehabilitation Centre (Portugal)
- d) The Miroslav Zotovic Rehabilitation Clinic (Serbia)

Representatives of the recipients from the delegations present accepted the awards on their behalves.

BRONZE, SILVER AND GOLD MEDALLIONS OF THE WVF

64. Lt. Gen. Knobel announced and explained the medallions, which were to be awarded at the 60th anniversary celebrations. Nominations were to be submitted by March 2010.

The Assembly approved by acclamation. The cost of creating the mould had been borne by Mr. David Knowles and Lt. Gen. Knobel.

CLOSING SESSION

65. The President gave the floor to Mr. Goujat who expressed deep emotions to the Moroccans with regard to the desecration of war graves. France recognised the sacrifice of the Moroccan veterans and believed in respect for the dead.

66. Hungary was given the floor and extended greetings to the Assembly. They stand strongly against Neo-Nazism and stand for peace and democracy. They thanked the Executive Board for the organisation of the Assembly and wished the newly elected members all the best.

67. The President congratulated Hungary on their National Day.

68. Germany was given the floor and expressed their thanks to the WVF for the invitation to attend. They have similar aims and objectives to the WVF and are concerned with former service people. They have 600,000 members including 200,000 in the German Armed Forces Association. Unification occurred 19 years ago and they now have peaceful aims and new veterans from peacekeeping.

The German Federal Ministry of Defence fully supports the WVF.

69. The President gave the floor to the League of Arab States.

Mr. Mussayaba extended best wishes. The League fully supported veterans and advocates for peace.

The Secretary General expressed his thanks and hoped for continued cooperation.

70. The President opened the floor to several other countries for brief comments:
- a) Australia - Commonwealth War Graves
Vietnam Veterans Family Study
Suicide in the Ex-Service community
 - b) Serbia - Appreciated the constructive work of the WVF. Disappointed by Kosovo's acceptance into the WVF
 - c) Israel: Col. Avigad Disappointed by the Arab League. Thanks to the Executive Board and especially to Mrs. Martine Fort and staff. Special thanks were extended to the Danish hosts.

Israel: Brig. Yifrah Their membership pay their dues. Concerned that meeting was more like a mini UN than a veterans' organisation. Proposed to separate the agendas.
 - d) Argentina Expressed congratulations. Veterans have a duty to work for peace. Thanks were extended and a gift was presented.
 - e) Morocco Stated that they were pleased with the results achieved and felt they had contributed. Expressed gratitude to Denmark and the Executive Board. Presentations.
 - f) There were several other presentations.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

71. The President advised that no official offers had been made. Any offers should be submitted by 30 June 2010.

REPORT OF THE PLENARY WORKING SESSIONS

72. Brig. Townsend suggested that the minutes be circulated and ratified at the next General Assembly. This was accepted by the majority.

CLOSING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

73. The President thanked all for their participation. He thanked the Danish Blue Berets and all those who had contributed to the success of the meeting, including His Royal Highness Prince Joachim.

He stated that the resolutions adopted would contribute to the building of a better future for the benefit of members of the WVF and generations to come, to save them from the damaging effects of war and armed conflict. He wished all the participants a safe return to their respective countries and declared the meeting closed.